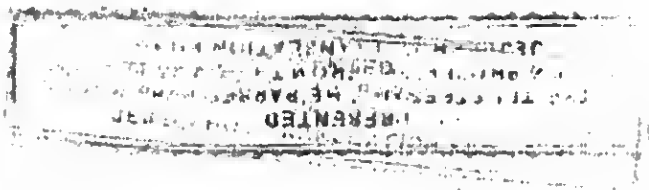


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ACROSS THE SAHARA



THE AUTHOR

ACROSS THE SAHARA

By

F. J. DAVAR, F.R.G.S.

Author of

"CAMEOS OF THE GREAT WAR"
AND "CYCLING OVER THE ROOF OF THE WORLD"

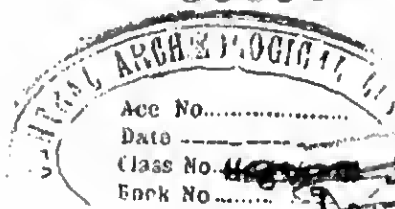
WITH A FOREWORD BY

HIS EXCELLENCY
SIR HERBERT PALMER

K.C.M.G., C.B.E., F.R.G.S.

Governor of the British Mediterranean Isles

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FOREWORD

By

H.E. SIR HERBERT PALMER

K.C.M.G., C.B.E., F.R.G.S.

Governor of the British Mediterranean Isles

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
CYPRUS.

MR. DAVAR's long journeys round the world are reminiscent of those of the great mediæval travellers rather than of the well-equipped modern explorer. With practically no kit and two ordinary bicycles, he and his companion took seven years to complete their wanderings from the Old World to the New, and from the North Cape to Tropical Africa. To have crossed the Sahara with bicycles is a unique feat, and in this pleasantly written work Mr. Davar describes his experiences : the great reception he secured in Africa from all classes, and his reactions to the novelty of the strange and romantic atmosphere of the Sahara, and the Sudan belt of the South of it.

The spirit in which the book itself is written will

show the reader why Mr. Davar was able to make his way without much help and without any forceful assistance, through regions where a man who was less a citizen of the world would have experienced considerable difficulty, if not hostile opposition.

It is a pleasure to recall the fact that I was able to help Mr. Davar on his lightly equipped bicycle journey through a part of Nigeria which is still somewhat primitive ; where he did not know one word of the local languages, and where he must have been dependent on the kindness of the unknown and simple Africans for everything.

Mr. Davar's journeys in Africa not only reflect lustre on him personally as an intrepid traveller, but are a monument to the good feeling between East and West that a friendly and proper approach to the contacts can produce.

P R E F A C E

THE mood in which I undertook to girdle the globe on a push-bike for seven long years (1924-1931) was mainly one of rational curiosity. One must travel long and far before the mind is glutted and surfeited with having known the ways of the world chiefly through the eye-gate. We are inclined to doubt very much whether the ancient pilgrimages of the Christians were not made more with a curiosity, rational or idle we shall not stop here to inquire, to see the world, than through any motives of devotion and piety. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* amply illustrate the sheer gad-about nature of those pilgrimages.

My belief, after seven years of touring through fifty-two big and small countries of the world, is that one year of careful and observant travelling is worth seven years of stay-at-home reading. "No observation is more common," remarks Goldsmith, "and at the same time more true, than that one half of the world are ignorant how the other half lives." Extensive travelling preserves a man from the contraction of his mind which another can hardly

escape whose whole life has been spent in one neighbourhood with one generation, in a shocking state of ignorance half voluntary and half imposed. In fine, extensive travelling gives room to extensive knowledge.

I was prevented from publishing a narrative of the whole of my world tour by the thought that it might not perhaps fail to come to the reader more or less as a drone. Where to go and what to see in the several parts of Europe and America is, I think, copiously told and illustrated in the prospectus of any travel bureau of the West. Such a volume, particularly from me, might also be constantly on the verge of proving itself "a book of geography gone mad," so that I was tempted to select only a small part of my journey, which, from the experience of travellers and in the opinion of the rest of the world, was the most fascinating.

Of the sixty-eight thousand miles of "pure cycling" I have done (i.e., not counting the distances traversed on camels or mules, or in ships and on foot), my choice first fell on the "Inferno Verde"—the Green Hell—(the Amazon Valley of South America), so thoroughly green-mantled that it might give you a green blood and send you off with a green cancer! The West Coast of Africa—the land of silly witches who sold to you everything from dead men's dust to live men's lust—was also

not without a strong appeal. But stronger than the impressions made by either the Green Hell or the Dark Continent was the influence upon me of my



MAP OF THE TRAIL THROUGH THE DESERT
(Hand Drawing)

trail through the Great Desert—so inviting, yet so treacherous.

I should never have been able to penetrate so

successfully into the heart of the Sahara had it not been for the comforts of guides, camels, provisions, etc., so generously provided by the kind French officers in the different outposts of the desert. I wish particularly to tender my sincerest thanks to the British Consul-General for Algiers, the Honble. G. P. Churchill and to Col. Meynier, Governor-General of Algeria, and other French officials, due to whose kindness my journey was greatly facilitated.

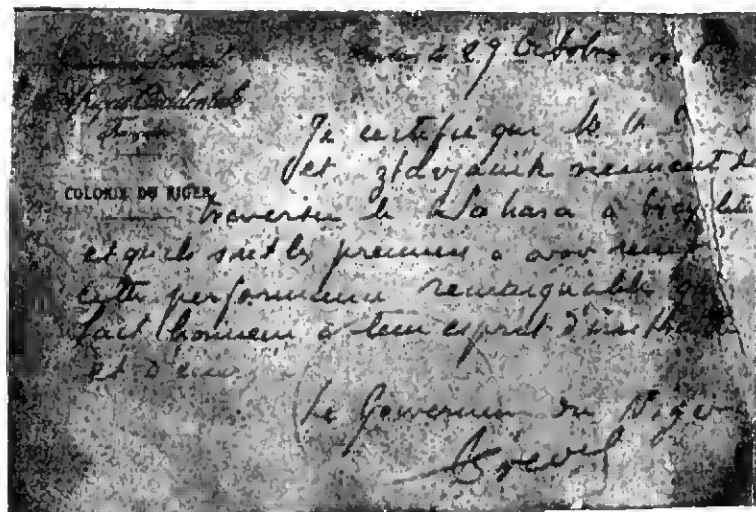
My grateful thanks are also due to Lady Cowasjee Jehangir (Senr.) and Sir. H. P. Mody, K.B.E., for heading the "Davar Testimonial Committee," and to its active and obliging Honorary Secretaries, the late Mr. D. F. Cama and Dr. M. E. Pavri, J.P., for receiving, at various intervals, very timely help from the Committee. My thanks are also due to H.E. The Rt. Hon. Sir Leslie Wilson (then Governor of Bombay); to the late Sir Jamsetjee Jeejibhoy, Bart., C.S.I.; the late Sir Dorab Tata; Col. D. D. Kambatta, O.B.E.; Sir H. C. Dinshaw, Kt., M.V.O., O.B.E.; the late Mr. P. J. Murzban, C.I.E.; the late Mr. G. K. Nariman; and to Mr. R. B. Paymaster, advocate, who by his very praiseworthy efforts, created among the citizens of Bombay a very lively interest in my tour. I am also much obliged to my sister, Miss J. J. Davar, for carefully preserving all the short-script journals of my travels which I wrote *en route*, while my best

PREFACE

11

thanks are due to Mr. Darab C. Bharucha for valuable literary help.

Finally, my young Austrian companion, Gustav Sztavjanik, requires to be introduced. When I was



" . . . ILS SONT LES PREMIERS A AVOIR ACCOMPLI CETTE PERFORMANCE REMARQUABLE. . . ."

in Vienna, Gustav expressed his desire to join me. He was yet in his teens—his last teen—and full of a lively colour and freshness of vigorous youth as yet unstained by cares or crosses. At first I greatly hesitated to take him, thinking that he was only temporarily aroused in spirits, like all youngsters,

with seeing the receptions I met with in Vienna. But very soon I found out that in the hardest journey he was almost as patient as the camel, always hopeful, genial and plodding.

Only a few youngsters can pitch or strike a tent with as much soldier-like ease and quickness as young Gustav ; a few only can brace up the pack-saddles, or shove off the hundred odds and ends of a tourist's equipment (at the same time producing them at a moment's notice), or repair a puncture, or even restrain an obstinate Andean mule with a mere "Ho-la !" as truly as my travelling companion. My very best thanks to Gustav for his pleasant company.

For the photographs included in this book I am indebted to Mr. E. P. Artist (M.S.A., London) for skilfully toning up two or three valuable plates among the rest which I thought were lost to me. Most of the films were entirely spoiled due to the unusual heat of the desert ; and, moreover, when your frame is shattered with camel riding you are no longer in a mood to give your camera a fair chance.

F. J. D.

BOMBAY.

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INTRODUCTION

GENERAL—FAUNA AND FLORA—EXPLORATIVE TRAVEL-
LING IN THE GREAT DESERT—REV. CHARLES DE
FOUCAULD AND GEN. LAPPERINE

ANY attempt to form a mental picture of the Sahara would end in a signal failure. This is sad intelligence ; but the truth of it is that the human mind is incapable of visualising fully what the eye has never seen before.

The boundless expanse of sand, inundated with the heat of the merciless sun, is inscrutable to man's imagination ; sand interminable, sand stretching into infinity—the perpetual sand of the Great Desert is the constant subject of your bewilderment. You get a glimpse into the wonders of Creation—the creation of endless sands and the blazing sun. Sirius is King over the teeming population of sands. Sand and sun, and sun and sand, and still the same sun and the same sand, and for evermore sun and sand—of all the things on earth the Great Desert seems to be made up only of sand and sun—water is a blot on its smooth, shimmering face, the sparse

vegetation is a superfluity, and men and camels are mere intruders.

And yet nothing could be more erroneous than to suppose the Sahara to be all sand and all sun ; there is the greatest variety in the physical configuration of its surface. It is not, as is popularly thought to be, a dead-level bed of sand ; its regions range from a hundred feet below the sea-level to five, six and even eight thousand feet above it ; and, besides containing mountains as well as plains of sand, oases, rocky plateaux, and endless tracts of loose stones and pebbles, it has chains of barren mountains with pointed peaks strangely worn-out by the sands of the desert no less than by the " sands of Time."

There is a great variety in its climate, too. The midday and the midnight temperatures vary by not less than seventy degrees, the hundred and forty of the scorching day running down to a mild seventy. One spot in the desert is hot and causes great uneasiness ; another, not distant fifty miles from it, is hotter and yet causes no obsession ; you never feel tired, you do not perspire ; the climate is sparkling dry. One place is overflowed with water ; not fifty miles from it a whole caravan perishes for want of it.

Although a complete aridity of the soil and atmosphere, absence of water-courses and a comparative thinness of animal and vegetable life are

the distinguishing traits of the Sahara, yet even a hasty reference to its fauna and flora will at once



THE SAND FOX

(A rare snap. He is always half buried in the sand. What he finds to eat within a radius of ten miles from his hole is a point of conjecture, even to the Arabs)

convince us of its habitability and fertility. Lions, leopards and panthers are but rare ; gazelles, antelopes, hyenas, jackals, apes and monkeys are common. Eagles, ostriches, vultures, ravens, storks, herons and owls are among the feathered tribe, and the reptilia include various species of snakes, mostly harmless lizards, tortoises and turtles. Camels, as also horses and goats, are the most important domestic animals of the desert ; while, in the eastern portions of the Sahara a fine stock of the ass is found. In the country of the Tuaregs (of which more hereafter), a fine breed of sheep is a valuable asset.

The most abundant among the flora of the Great Desert is undoubtedly the doum, or date-palm. But also pomegranate, figs, peach, apricot and vines are not wanting. There are extensive forests on the mountain ranges yielding oak, pine, cedar, olive, maple, elm and ash, and even cork.

Explorative travelling in the Sahara is comparatively recent, and in most cases it has ended in wholesale slaughter of the explorers with their train. Several explorers perished also on account of the hazardous nature of travelling in the desert, being overwhelmed by sandstorms or run short of water ; while not a few were murdered by their own Tuareg guides and escorts.

The most revolting cruelty yet known to men was

perpetrated by the Tuaregs against Col. Flatters and his ninety men, near Timbuctoo, in 1881. The ill-fated expedition left Wargla with several Tuareg guides who seemed to give the most sanguine promise of a safe conduct through their land. But, in the valley of Tin Tarabin, the treacherous Tuaregs fell upon Col. Flatters and a few men who were travelling in company with him and killed them. Those that escaped turned northward for the water-wells of Amjid; on the way the Tuaregs fed them with poisoned dates. The whole company was seized with an hysterical laughter. In the meanwhile, their food was exhausted, and they practised cannibalism among themselves. A few, however, succeeded in reaching the wells of Amjid; they begged for water. But the hard-hearted Tuaregs refused and, with water perhaps only at arm's length, they perished.

In 1893, Col. Bonnier and his men were murdered by the dreadful Tuaregs in Takorav. But nine years later in the battle of Tit, Col. Cottonest killed a hundred Tuaregs, and since then this proud and haughty race is more or less subdued by the French Government. But the French influence over the greater part of the Sahara was gained only after such repeated acts that hallow every form of sacrifice.

Rev. Charles de Foucauld was one of the numerous priceless victims whom the inexorable

Sahara claimed of France, during the Great War. If rightly we may say that to labour is to worship, the shrine at which de Foucauld worshipped was service to humanity ; and this he did amongst the wildest Tuaregs of the Hoggar Mountains, " the Forgotten of God."

Charles de Foucauld, the Hermit of the Sahara, was a child of the French nobility ; yet he had spent his youth, while at the Military College of St. Cyr, in a tumult and storm of pleasures and extreme levity of conduct. However, he soon changed and became a Trappist monk, imposing upon himself all the sufferings of an austere life. He would *walk* ten miles in the desert to help a distressed brother, and very soon stories were afloat of his ascetic living. Even the wild Tuaregs, with all their bigotry, loved and honoured him ; for he had successfully inculcated into their callous hearts a sense of devotion and gratitude.

His influence on them was plainly felt during the Tuareg-Sinussi revolt subsequent upon the Great War. Indeed, he held the Tuaregs under such command that the Sinussists were not in peace until they had killed him. The pious Trappist, who for his house occupied no more space than a hearth-rug, was asked one night, by one of a gang of Sinussists who pretended to be a post-courier, to come out of it. As soon as the credulous priest

opened the door the whole gang pounced upon him, bound his hands behind his back—one single bullet passed through the neck and sent him into the Kingdom of Heaven. He fell down in a kneeling posture ; his murderers hurriedly buried him in the same posture in a small dug-out not far off from his humble dwelling. The most precious records of Rev. Foucauld concerning the descent and the history of Tuareg culture were then destroyed. For nearly five years "The Friend of All the Desert," as he was called by the French officers, lay in an obscure place. But there is nothing hidden under the sun that Time shall not reveal !

The valiant Gen. Lapperine about this time conceived the bold idea of attempting a flight over the Sahara, starting from Algiers. His aeroplane, however, broke down in the most dangerous part of the Sahara—Tanezrouft, or the land of thirst. He was injured much in the chest, while his two companions escaped with only a few bruises. The General died a few days later (5th March, 1920) and his body was brought to be buried to Tamanrasset.

The deep intimacy between Rev. Foucauld and Gen. Lapperine was known all over the Sahara. Both these explorer-soldiers had spent their youth in the same military college, were sent out to the same military stations, and had fallen in the same

God-forsaken desert. So it was proposed by the officers that both should share the same place (Tamanrasset) for their final rest. But when Foucauld's grave was opened to carry the body to Tamanrasset a startling revelation was made : the body was found to be as wholesome as a baby's ! This incident, witnessed by the French officers and the Tuaregs, greatly inspired in them genuine feelings of love and respect for their quondam friend and servant.

A monument in the shape of an obelisk has been erected at Tamanrasset in memory of Rev. Charles de Foucauld, the Saint of the Sahara, and Gen. Lapperine, the Conquering Hero of the Sahara, the two sons of France who have joined

" The choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence."

A permit to pass through the Great Desert is not easily obtained. The traveller has to submit himself to a justly scrupulous inquiry of the French Government, regarding his age, nationality, physical fitness, his interest in travelling, his social and particularly his financial condition, and other details. At every outpost he is photographed ; and the officer-in-charge, before signing in the traveller's visit-book, must be satisfied that he carries with him nearly

a month's provisions and at least a week's supply of water.

The Sahara, like any other desert of the world, is not altogether inaccessible to cyclists. There are vast tracts of land, studded with round pebbles or with stumps of small-grass, that provide a pleasurable cycling ; but the camel remains "the ship of the desert." I think about one-twentieth part of the Sahara (not a small fraction) is favourable to cycling.

CHAPTER I

THE START—THE "MAGIC CARPET" OF THE SAHARA

THE "Governor-General Jaunat" brings us from Algiers to Marseilles, 28th of April, 1926. Nearly a month of cycling, during which we pass through the province of Constantine and see the Roman ruins of Lambèse and Timgud—the Roman temples and triumphal arches and aqueducts, the prætorium with its Corinthian pilasters rising from the centre of the vast Roman Camp, the vast cemeteries with their stones only recently upturned to build the modern town of Batna, and all the mighty masonry of a mighty nation—nearly a month of cycling through these places brings us to the threshold of the Great Desert, Biskra, from where I shall commence to narrate the experiences of my desert trail.

Biskra is one of the best winter residences of the world. At least twenty-five thousand visitors from America and from the Continent go there each year. Although it is close to the desert its climate is extremely healthy. There is hardly any rain, the weather is always softly sunny and the sky always

of a mild blue. Only at seven kilometres distance there are hot sulphurous springs, called Hamam



THE START
(Biskra)

Saline ; and the neighbourhood is full of game, consisting chiefly of gazelles or antelopes. In

summer this is one of the hottest cities of the world.

At six o'clock in the morning of the 25th of May, 1926, we left Biskra. A single kilometre's ride brought us to the Oasis D'el Alia, and 3 kilometres more found us at the Oasis de Faliakh. In the Sahara, wherever there is a source of water an oasis is sure to occur. Twenty kilometres more and we were at the Oasis de Sidi Akba ; and only ten paces ahead Gustav rode his bicycle into a large hole (which he could not see because, as he said, "everything there was one sand"), and the fork of the front wheel gave way. This was only the first day of the journey, and the incident was not at all prophetic of a safe passage through the desert ! There were certainly no bicycle repairers in Sidi Akba, and poor Gustav had to go all the way back to Biskra for the accessory.

On the second day we cut away 45 kilometres so smoothly that I was almost disappointed to find the Great Desert so easy of access. There were no slopes to ascend and to descend ; there was no slipping of the bicycles over the shifting sands, no twitching of the shoulders, no feeling of exhaustion, nor even of thirst. Yet there was no reason why we should not have found that to be a pleasurable journey. But somehow neither I nor Gustav enjoyed it. We were unusually silent that day till

we reached the Oasis de Stil late after sunset ; perhaps we were awed by the thought of the long trail of thirty-three hundred kilometres that lay before us !

We were already 5 kilometres ahead of Stil before the sun rose, and were ascending a natural acclivity of the ground ; thereafter we traversed a dead level bed of sand for 16 kilometres. A flash of light from a great distance suddenly dazzled my eyes quite as much as if a piece of the sun had fallen on the ground, and quickly vanished. Shortly afterwards there came again another flash ; but this time it was slightly less brilliant and did not vanish as quickly as before. Gradually the whole place from where the light came seemed studded with small bits of the sun, which now began to give out highly lustrous and colourful lights.

That was the Magic Carpet of the Great Desert. Temporarily, Nature seemed to have squandered all the richest of her gems on that barren spot. The ruby, the emerald and the sapphire, the topaz and the bloodstone, the yellow diamond, the beryl and the chrysoberyl and the lapis-lazuli—each had a place in it. Not all the richest jewellery of the world put together, either meticulously arranged on the ground or carelessly scattered in a pleasant confusion, would have produced a vision half so enchanting. We were only three days deep in the

desert and we had seen what an Arab himself rarely sees in his entire life.

It would be sweet indeed to believe, like the Arabs, that such a magic carpet physically existed. The scientific-minded people explain it barely by saying that there are deposits of saline, iodine, quicksilver, magnesium and other salts at this place which reflect light. It was called Shott Merouane, and a little distance away was another similar place called Shott Melrhir. A Shott is a shallow lake which usually dries up in the hot season.

Passing through the oases of Ourir, Sidi Khelil and Dajma, we reached Toggurt, thus completing about 250 kilometres from Biskra. From Toggurt to Wargla was a week's journey ; and it was from here that our bicycles were to be of little use to us as we were obliged to proceed on camels.

We took three camels, two for ourselves and one for load, and the Arab Bureau of Toggurt provided us with an escort of three Arab soldiers on foot. The food provisions taken were sufficient to last us a week, and the officers kindly lent us a pair of water tanks, each of a hundred litres capacity, which I promised to return, along with the Arabs, on reaching Wargla.

An officer took our separate photographs, critically examined the provisions we had taken, including a small bag in which we carried small quantities of

medicines, passed them as reliable for a week's journey, and we left Toggurt. Twelve kilometres distant was Tamassin ; here we halted.

A pleasant tale is associated with the name of Tamassin. The Sultan of Toggurt, it is said, sent a large army (I was not told in which year) to seize Haji Ali, a soldier-saint of Tamassin. At this impudent act the wrath of Allah was so great that, when the Sultan's soldiers marched into Tamassin, the palm-trees began to shoot dates like bullets and the whole army was completely routed ! An Arab pays more respect to his grandmother's tales than to his wife. Nevertheless, I liked this one ; it illustrates Providence well.

We witnessed one tragic incident as we were entering into the small village of Tamalhat early in the morning. Two sorry looking Arabs were carrying two babies, wrapped in dirty cloth, to the burial ground outside the village. Their death was due to a scorpion bite while they were sleeping together.

The temperature of the place ranged usually between 122° and 126° F. Our practice was to march by night and to rest during the day. The sky over the desert is generally starry and the scanty light is diffused uniformly by the white sands. Five nights of marching, during which we covered 185 kilometres, brought us to Wargla.

CHAPTER II

IN WARGLA—A RARE ACQUAINTANCE—CAUGHT IN A
STORM—THE CAMEL

IN WARGLA

WE were received in Wargla by Capt. and Mme Duffue. The kind host and hostess had, previous to our arrival, made all arrangements for our board and lodging.

Late in the evening we went for a stroll in the growing city of Wargla. Most of the houses had a cluster of date-palms, and very often, close to them, a water-well. The roads were all filled with sand, so that walking was rather irksome. Numbers of Arabs were lying at full length under shady groves after a hard day's journey. Although the Arabs (by the way) are a stalwart race, the privations of desert marches, suffered for generations, never fail to leave deep marks on their faces : thoroughly dry eyes that, on account of deep cavities, seem to protrude much ; deeply pressed temples ; and the whole expanse of cheeks sadly stripped of flesh.

And as they keep their tall bodies usually covered in loose robes, they seem to suffer a sort of partial starvation of the face while the body apparently thrives. I met an old Arab here who had been round the whole of the Sahara nearly half a dozen times ; he was so inured to starvation that his natural appetite had been reduced to that of a diseased child, and there were more points and projections on his body and face than there were angles and corners in the minarets of the fair mosque of Wargla.

The fair mosque of Wargla ! Every Mahomedan town in the East bristles with minarets and domes. The first care of a Mahomedan conqueror of old, more than restoring peace and order among the conquered or winning their good will, was often to erect a monumental structure that would preserve the lustre of his immortal name from tarnishing. And thus we have to-day the beautiful mosques of Egypt ; the Alhambra of Spain, with its magnificent arabesques ; the mosque of Kairawan, in Tunis, whose fountain is said to communicate with the stream Zemzem, in Mecca ; the mosque of 'Amr, in Old Cairo, with its eighteen thousand lamps ; the Great Mosque of old Delhi, for whose erection twenty-seven Hindu temples were destroyed about the first quarter of the 13th century ; and the romantic Taj Mahal, one of the seven wonders of the world ! But the poor mosque of Wargla had to

content itself with mud instead of marble, and palm thatch in place of ebony. The pulpit of the Imam, or Khatib (the President in worship), in Cairo or Mecca, might well emulate with the Peacock Throne of Nadirshah ; but in the poorest mosque of Wargla it consisted solely of an inverted bucket.

We came up to a very high minaret made entirely of mud or mire. I was told by the Arabs that this was the highest structure of mud in the world ! We should readily grant this proud claim of the Arabs ; but I have my strong doubts as to the Arab's conception of the world. Whenever he says " all the world," he generally means only the desert or, if he is one of the devoted faithful, the desert and Mecca, the land of the pilgrims.

A few paces further brought us to a lady's French provision stores. We stepped in to ask the price of the delicious *Vin Rouge*, and, according to my expectation, she declared six times the usual price. After a good deal of disputation, consequent upon the lady's extraordinary aptitude for over-rating her goods (so very general with all shop-owners when they deal with foreigners), in less than twenty minutes she came down to three francs a bottle ; we took three or four bottles and made a handsome repast that night upon eggs, macaroni pudding and sandwiches.

The temperature here is constantly so high

(140 degrees under shade is not uncommon) that all glass-ware has to be covered in canvas and then kept immersed in water. There were only four military officers here and, for going from office to office, they had a small tram-car, accommodating half a dozen people, drawn by a camel. Their dress is entirely white, consisting of a white loose shirt, very baggy white pyjamas, a white cap and sandals of camel skin.

The next morning I repaired to the "Arab Bureau" of Wargla to consult the officer-in-charge about my journey as far as Ain Sala. The chief officer received me cordially, and at once drew up a list of my equipage : twenty-two camels, a couple of zinc tanks for water, and foodstuffs for twelve men to last one month ! I was to pay £50 for the hire of the camels ; and the water-tanks, which he wanted me to buy off, and the food provisions, etc., were estimated at £38 extra ! My blood congealed : with difficulty I suppressed a quiver down the spine. As gently as I could, I told the officer that, judging from the list presented to me, he might have mistaken my small company for a self-sufficing Light Brigade. He, however, remonstrated that the explorer, Buchanan, during his journey to Ain Sala, where I was going, had employed no less than thirty-two camels ; and that General Neville spent £600 upon the same journey. I told him that

although such a mode of travelling was highly approvable, it was not permissible in my case ; that instead of a cameleade of twenty-two strong, only three or four fleet-footed animals might do ; and that there was no need to buy off the water-tanks as I was sure to return them along with the guides as soon as I reached Ain Sala. The officer seemed impressed ; he asked me to protract my stay in Wargla a little longer, and promptly made the necessary arrangements.

9th June. At four in the evening, with three Arab spahis and a French soldier who was running on an errand of some medical orderly to Ain Sala, with altogether six camels, we left Wargla for Ain Sala. In seven years of travelling, I believe, I must have stayed under at least a thousand different roofs of a thousand hosts with a thousand different natures, but never have I seen such a rare specimen of humanity as that French soldier.

He was very solidly built but of a small stature (and yet what a mass of mischief was compacted in this perpendicular creature !). The closely cropped hair stood out stiffly on his perfectly round head, like stubble on a hillock. His small eyes bespoke a sort of restlessness so perceptible in people who are always on a look-out for original pranks. His nose was stupidly upturned, ending in a stupid dab ;

it seemed every moment to part with its owner and run ahead of him. The lower jaw protruded so much that very often he bit his upper lip while speaking ; and whenever he laughed he displayed an irregular set of repulsively unclean teeth.

Full of spleen and rancour, he was always at war within himself, when not engaged in belligerencies with his fellows. It was as much his nature to fight as the nature of the sun is to shine ; he might watch and wait for a year to fight with you for five minutes. He was one of those swaggering, blustering young men who are always saying or doing what is not exactly right and are yet suffered by the sensible world to live with impunity, being pardoned when they ought to be punished, and pitied when they ought to be reproached. This man had no such scruples as decency and propriety and self-respect and clear conscience and all that ; he had grown up in a negative state with regard to these trifles.

This French soldier was a cross between Don Quixote and Mrs. Grundy—the plague of the neighbourhood—an apology of his officers—the scandal of the army—a walking lunatic asylum—the very refuse of mankind. I had the privilege of his company for nearly a fortnight, during which I thought I was only next door to madness. In his company, then, we started from Wargla.

On the way he began to tell me stories of ghosts and spectres he had seen in the desert while at night watch—a sure indication that his mind was more than half loosened from its moorings. Then as he saw that yet his diabolology did not run my blood cold, he descended from the aerial to the horizontal and bade me to beware of the Arab spahis and their dangling daggers, and to be vigilant when I slept ! I assured him that from my experience there was no reason whatever to fear the Arabs : but, just at this moment, my friend Gustav, interrupted, saying, “ The Arabs *are* a dangerous people ; they have stolen my tin of conserves. . . .”

That night we rested at Gara K'rima, an absolutely barren spot in the desert. The next day we came up to Hassi-el-Ferrez, another barren place. Some of these places are so thoroughly devoid of animal or vegetable life that the traveller is at a loss to know how they came to have even a name. Very often a cluster of trees or a dry well is sufficient to give the place a high-sounding name, of which Gara K'rima and Hassi-el-Ferrez are good examples. The traveller is thus very likely to get into a tight corner if, from mere names of places, he anticipates and, what is still worse, relies upon a supply of provisions, exchange of camels, and, most important, a refill of water.

The temperature at midday was always close to

140 degrees, but less in the evening and least, of course, in the morning. The major part of day being unsuited to travelling, we used to rest in the tent which we extemporised by planting our bicycles in the sands close apart and stretching leather-jackets over them. The temperature under shade at Kasi Leycha was 120 degrees. After a full day's march (which usually for us meant the hours between 4 a.m. and 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and 9 p.m.) from Kasi Leycha, we came up to Hassi Jamal.

So far we used to come across water-wells at almost fixed intervals of thirty kilometres, but the water in them was either murky or very salt. Hassi Jamal has a well of sweet water. It was from here that we were to take an adequate supply of water because, as far as Inifel, six days to go, I was told, water was not to be had at any cost.

The weather was roughening a little. As usual, fixing the bicycles in the sands we pitched our tent ; but soon the wind rose and, as often as we pitched it it was struck to the ground. There is a limit beyond which patience ceases to be a virtue. The sand-blast began to assume very alarming proportions and the heat was intensely oppressive. The French soldier, who was equipped with poles and canvas, was able to pitch a steady tent ; we begged his permission to enter into it, but just at such a critical moment it pleased him to refuse us. Not deigning

to flatter his light mentality by further supplications, we took refuge in a dug-out or a kind of trench especially made near the well for its caretaker. But he was audacious enough to incite the spahis to ask us to leave the trench at once, for what reason none could tell. The storm had grown so overwhelmingly violent that breathing required extraordinary efforts ; the hot sands rushed through the nostrils with increasing heat and intensity ; we felt an insufferable, parching sensation in the throat ; and the eyes were smarting under the furnace-breath of the desert. We could see no possibility of an escape but in the tent of the French soldier, and at last we forced our way into it. He levelled his gun at us. I flung at him the letter of recognition given to me by the French Government at Algiers, and plainly declared *my* unalterable will to remain in *his* tent.

The true worth of a fighter lies more in rising up each time he is beaten down than in merely throwing down his opponent. By his previous conversations with me I had known the French soldier to be a miserable dastard of a soldier. When we defied even his gun, he flinched. We established ourselves in his tent, and very soon afterwards, as if nothing had happened, to our great surprise, he took out a tin of conserves (Gustav's own !) from one of the pack-saddles and gave us a goodly share, enjoying it also himself.

I have wondered very often since this incident whether this soldier's mentality could fall under any accepted classification of the psychologists. I have arrived at no solution beyond the fact that with some men evil is their good. I believe, this man's intention in not admitting us into his tent was simply to render us homeless and then to gloat over the sight of storm-stricken and helpless victims.

We carefully watered the camels. The spahis got good rations this day as the French soldier was in rich humour—not far away from his tent we had killed two poisonous vipers.

From Hassi Jamal, after a 30 kilometres' ride, we came up to Jamila ; and the next day, after an equal distance, to Rachak Lethal. Both these places, like the many passed before, were quite dry. The temperature under shade was 120 degrees. We felt as if we were plunged into a seething cauldron ; the water in the skins was nearly at its boiling-point. Our khaki clothes and brown leather boots were actually blanched and shrivelled by heat. We continually tossed from side to side for one moment of cool repose.

Oppressive silence, like that in a necromancer's hall, reigned ; the desert seemed changed into a new heaven of suns, an endless succession of braziers white with fire, hot, feverish, agonizing. The Bled-el-Ateuch, or the land of thirst, of the Arabs, cruelly

mocked at us, and our frailty doubled the stings of its mockery. How if water failed us ! Each one of the company had a fixed and equal quantity of it—six ounces per day. I had found, from experience, that the more we drank the more thirsty we felt, with the result that we were hopelessly oppressed and unable to go on. The camels had their fill at the watering-places ; or, these failing, we watered the animals on every third day.

We pushed forward from Rachak Lethal the next day. The weather was threatening from the start ; it continued so and, by about six in the evening, mountains of sand rose and fell. We could hardly see each other ; even the desert-born camels and the Arabs were baffled by these repeated hazards. The sands importunately got into the eyes, the nose, and down the throat. We were submerged in a passionate sea of sand.

The Arabs got down from the camels and, unloading them, bound their legs. The chafing sands were blown with the wind probably at thirty miles per hour. This explains the characteristic appearance of the Saharan mountains—precipitous walls of stone deeply grooved by the fast passage of sands, as if a giant fork had scratched them. These mountains are thus deeply hollowed out from the base and they afford excellent shelter to the traveller.

The French soldier had chanced to sprain his

ankle during the storm ; forgetting the past, and filled with compassion towards him for his mentality, I embrocated and bandaged his foot. But he felt neither grateful nor ashamed for this act of mine. The storm lowered at midnight completely. The next morning we released the camels and set off.

THE CAMEL

The absolute indispensability of the camel's services to the traveller can never be exaggerated. With the help of this " ship of the desert " even a grain of sand may not escape the touch of a searching hand. I will not be guilty of the slightest exaggeration when I say that this animal has affected the desert-born just as much as their hereditary instincts, and perhaps even more than their contemporary history : for so many generations has the camel rested on its breast and limb-joints (when being loaded) that the indurated callosities on these parts of his body are probably the result of long ages of servitude rather than natural endowments.

The patience of the animal, especially under the privations of a sharp journey, is almost proverbial. Submissively it kneels to be loaded ; but when its burden is over-heavy, gently it winds its shaggy neck in a piteous supplication to its thoughtless master ; and you may even see a pair of imploratory

eyes completely dimmed with tears. But when "on the march," it is exceedingly patient, yielding beneath its burden only at the cost of its life. The strength, as also the form and the structure of the animal, is admirably suited to the task which it is destined to perform. With a load of about 400 lbs., the average camel can travel four days without water, doing 35 miles a day, and requiring a quantity of water on the fifth day. But in Mulhall's *Dictionary of Statistics* we read, "A camel has twice the carrying power of an ox ; with a load of 400 lbs. he can travel 12 or 14 days without water going 40 miles a day. The Timbuctoo or Mehari camels go 800 miles in 8 days with meals of dates or grain at nightfall."

The camels' suitability to its mode of life in point of form and structure may be comprehended by the fact that it is able to open or shut its nostrils at will, and thus it can prevent its acute sense of smell from coming into a ruinous contact with the winds of the desert which are not infrequently impregnated with hot sands. When overwhelmed by such simooms, or hot sandstorms, it crouches on its knees and, closing its nostrils remains in this position till the storm is overblown ; the traveller usually hides himself behind the beast and finds some protection against the storm. But instances are not wanting to show that the camel has often

been the saviour of caravans ; when a whole train is about to perish for want of water, by its keen sense of smell it feels the presence of water nearly a mile off, and then without the chance of going astray it darts off with the load to it.

The camel's milk is in fact the staple *food* of certain Arab tribes. Kinglake tells us of an Arab Sheik and his family that "lived habitually for nine months of the year without touching or seeing either bread or water. 'The stunted shrub,'" says Kinglake, "growing at intervals through the sand enables the camel mares to yield a little milk, and this furnishes the sole food and drink of their owner and his people." The thick masses of long woolly hair are shorn off every year and brought into a variety of uses—from the artist's fine brush to the Arab's coarse clothing or his tent, while the hide is converted into strong leather. Its dung, is either used as fuel like cattle-dung in India, or it is incinerated for extracting sal-ammoniac.

We reached Garud Sarrifa. The sun was scorching at as early as 4 a.m. Every ten to fifteen minutes there was a cry for water, which I did my very best not to hear. The skins were decolourising from the inside and had already rendered the water turbid. The next day we reached Saraf Aoud Mia, a dried up river-bed without the least sign of habitation. The condition

of the poor camels was now extremely pitiable and affecting. Two of them were in urgent need of water, and the Arabs' repeated supplications compelled me to grant, not of course without danger to the whole train, thirty litres of it. The needy camels were watered and a little quantity sprinkled into the nostrils of the others.

During the last two days we had gone through 50 kmts. of difficulty and 20 more were now in store for us. With the help of binoculars I could see the walls of Inifel, or Fort Hassi Inifel. Bit by bit the kmts. fell, but every kmt. seemed to take us nearer the sun. We plodded on : after great labour surely there would be rest. Hassi Inifel was now only two kmts. ahead ; with our eyes kept constantly on the inviting walls we pressed forward. When at last we were about 300 yards before it suddenly the camels broke through the line and, with renewed strength in their lean and sinewy legs, made straight for the nearest well where they drank deep with audible gurgles at first eagerly, then lazily, and then lustily.

After a trying journey, the mere sight of an habitation was like a feast ; from a famine we had hit upon a banquet. The head-man of Inifel, Sidi Abdul Haak, came running to inquire after our comforts and wants. He was the only occupant of a rest-house which Inifel possesses. There were

eight large rooms in one of which was lying an old aeroplane. Outside the house were five carefully managed graves ; four of these, belonging to a missionary gentleman, a French officer and two soldiers, bore inscriptions. The officer was the last to die, his death being dated 1924. All these unfortunate men had died while journeying through the mocking Sahara.

My Arabs had already begun shaving each other's heads with their small daggers. Each one was engaged to make himself " at home " ; truly it was worth going out into the desert if only for the pleasure of coming, as we did, to a rest house. The French soldier came limping and began to ask me to put up at Inifel for a couple of days ; I acceded to his proposal.

Under the sheds of palm-trees, near the well, little after sunset, a large Arabian carpet was spread for dinner and soon we were tasting the Arabian Kouss-kouss or Pilau, a very savoury preparation of boiled rice, raisins (perhaps dried dates), aromatic spices, and meat or fowls. This dish is so richly palatable that I used to accept invitation from the natives merely for getting a chance to relish it ; it has left a " smacking impression " on my palate.

Throughout Africa (but especially in the west coast of Africa), woman is held to be greatly inferior

to man, and, consequently all the household duties devolve upon her. The man exerts himself as little as possible even to relieve his mate. Her chief work is to pound grains for the Kouss-kouss. Generally all the women living under one thatch join together in this work. With wooden pestles in their hands they stand round a huge mortar made also of the African khaya wood. One shrill voice leads the chorus and, as each woman follows it to the tune she knows best, the effect is very striking indeed ; the unflagging rhythm goes on by the thumping of the pestles and the clanging of the women's heavy bracelets.

After repasting on the Kouss-kouss, we had a postprandial programme of music in which great numbers followed as a result of very generous contributions by the regaled Arabs. The French soldier surpassed the capabilities of a reputed punchinello. My companion Gustav, seized with a patriotic fervour, gave free vent to his spirits by roaring a fragment or two of his national anthem. Gustav's music was tolerable (considering the neighbourhood !) ; that of the French soldier was bad enough ; but the music of the Arabs, I am confirmed, might well stop a clock going !

CHAPTER III

INIFEL TO AIN SALAH THE BLACK—THROUGH THE
PETRIFIED DESERT—THE FIRE OF PHOEBUS—
“MAKTOUB”

DEPARTURE FROM INIFEL

June 21 : We started from Inifel and were now passing through the petrified desert. The soft, submissive and ever-shifting sands were now superseded by black, round pebbles or loose stones—burning hot.

The gait of the camel is extremely awkward, although the Arab, in his poetry, recognises in it an acceptable standard of elegance ; and, as the hard ground of the petrified desert does not absorb shocks, at the end of his journey the traveller is very likely to get a disjointed spine. For this reason very often I preferred to “walk out” small distances, both for relief and for change, though, when on foot, we feel the heat more seething than when we are perched on the “airy heights” of the camel. But the traveller soon arrives at a stage when he can neither ride on the camel nor can he walk.

We took eight days to cover about 400 kmts.

of this petrified region. The temperature during the day was as constant as that of a well-managed glass furnace. Our mouths parched, our blood boiled, and the flesh seemed to be charring. My friend, Gustav, was bleeding through the nose.

One of these days we began to feel a smell like that of burning rubber. Not unlike the sailors of Columbus, who, when they saw a stick floating in the water, guessed, and rightly too, that they were nearing some place of human habitation, the burning rubber at first prompted us to make a similar consolatory guess ; but soon all our hopes were frustrated when one of our guides pointed at the bicycle tyres that were calcining.

We came up to Fugarat, one of those numerous hamlets of the Sahara whose capital possessions are a few palm-trees, some stocks of cereals, and a water-well. Yet this was the first village on our way from Wargla ; and, except at Inifel, we had spent all the days and nights entirely in the open—in direct communion with Mother Earth and in fellowship with the fiery Phoebus, with plenty of air and a scarcity of water.

On the 29th of June, a little after sunset, escorted by four men, we stepped into Ain Salah.

AIN SALAH, THE BLACK

Everything is black in Ain Salah—the ground

is black, the houses are built of black mud, and almost all the people are black. The inhabitants are not all Negroes, nor all Arabs ; there are racial divisions and distinctions ; a tolerably large village in the Sahara (and generally in all Africa) is made up of numerous racial admixtures. So that, not even an African can say to what particular race he belongs considering that his mother was half Ama-Zulu and half Achikunda, and his father half Ma-Batela and half Ba-Tetela. " And yet," says Schweinfurth, " it is impossible for anyone to survey the country (Africa) as a whole without perceiving that high above the multitude of individual differences there is throned a principle of unity, which embraces well-nigh all the population." Of course, the " principle of unity " referred to by him is the native colour of the race so greatly predominant as far north as the tropic of Cancer.

There were about half a dozen officers in Ain Salah. The detrimental influence of the climate was too clearly noticeable in their faces : oily skin dry withered lips and brassy eyes. A small sand-built house was allotted to us, and as usual we were the officers' messmates.

Considering the desert regions of Ain Salah and the resources of its vicinity, the table of the officers was always sumptuously laid out.

From the central ceiling hung a large fan which a

young Tuareg manœuvred by means of a long cord tied round his arm. The poor man, when thoroughly exhausted, would lie on the ground at full length and manage the unwieldy affair by tying the cord to his legs—an instance of Tuareg genius.

Ain Salah has a population of about 1500. The prominent race is of course the Arabs ; then come the Negroes, the Zambas, and the Hiratins. The Hiratin tribe is a mixture of Arabs and Negroes. There is an Arab chief in Ain Salah. The people are very proficient in the manufacture of bags and slippers of deerskin. The temperature is always high—nearly 120 degrees.

We stayed here for three days ; during this time all arrangements were made for our journey to Tamanrasset—one of the several God-forsaken places of the Great Desert. As promised to the officer-in-charge of the Arab Bureau at Wargla, I returned the two water tanks along with the guides to him. Thus we were now under the necessity of buying a pair of water tanks. The milk and the tin-foods often became sour and mouldy ; accordingly we changed our provisions to macaroni, farina and dates. Wiser by the bitter experiences of the last journey, we equipped ourselves with canvas slipshoes and very big canvas caps (somewhat like the Mexican sombrero), for protection against the sun.

We had a dozen phials of serums to be used as antidotes to snake-bite.

The officers at these outstations are always ready to receive travellers, as any new company greatly alleviates the pains of their monotonous existence. Most of them are unmarried and young, while the few that are married cannot bring their wives and children on account of the severity of the climate. Several officers, as I knew afterwards, having been posted on their stations for a long period (over six years), had formed a union with young Tuareg girls.

Just before our departure the kind officers presented me a bill : the tariff was quite reasonable, but the most remarkable in it, was a charge of a half-franc for the use I made of needle and thread to mend my shirt. (Note. The needle was duly returned.)

On the 1st of July, our "Kafilah" or caravan, made up of two fully accoutred military escorts, one military postman and an Arab Spahi to look after our six camels, pressed forward from Ain Salah.

START FROM AIN SALAH

We covered about 15 kmts. and halted for the night. At 3 oclock the following morning we resumed our journey, but usually at 10 a.m. it

became impossible to "carry on." The sun wielded his flaming sword ; he spared nothing ; every grain of sand was heated to blackness, and the whole desert was like a coalfield ablaze, fit alone for Pluto. We had to stop till a little before sunset. The interval was whiled away in making the most of farina and macaroni and dates. Chiefly at this time I used to make my notes of the journey.

When the fury of King Sol is somewhat subdued you may start your journey again. He gently touches you on one side before he goes down ; his face that a little while ago was white with fire is now red with the redness of roses. He has done a good day's work, and leaves you only to give you a dread of his rule on the morrow. Even as he sinks, you dare not look him in the face but, like the Persians, must bow low and close your eyes in veneration.

The nights in the desert are usually cool and often pleasant. But in these petrified regions, I found that the ground retained its heat long after sunset, even, to the extent of making the night more or less uncomfortable.

The third day of our journey commenced at 3 a.m. and we had to stop before 10. The desert now assumed a most horrid aspect. It seemed as if a mighty empire had been burnt down for the sole object of producing a ghastly spectacle of nothing but entire blackness, we were going along

the summit of a fairly big sand-dune when on one side of the slope my eyes fell upon a wild bull trying his level best to stare us out of countenance. For our own safety we were obliged to kill him.

The Great Desert is not without good game. The gazelles and the antelopes of the Sahara are perhaps the finest in the world—handsomest, most buxom creatures I have ever seen—"as dear as a lady!" The poor animals go about all their life so completely unmolested by man that, when they chance to see one, they are not frightened out of their wits like their fellows of the more beaten forests, but remain fixed at their place and wait, as he levels his gun to see what he is doing. It would be an extremely cruel sport to kill them merely for "game"; though we did it once or twice when we had not a morsel to eat.

It was now the fourth day of the march. During the hottest part of the day, as usual, we took shelter under our extemporised tent. The heat here was so intense that it was almost impossible to put out a finger from under the shade without chancing to scorch it as if by a magnifying glass. The water in the tanks had become so hot that, by way of experiment, we prepared tea from it successfully. We had two thermometers with us; but, being unable to withstand not, perhaps, the high temperature but a wide range in it of nearly 70 degrees

between day and night, both were broken ; Gustav told me that when he last saw them the mercury was at 144. We did 48 kmts. that day.

The fifth day gave us no change. The oppressive silence of the desert had stricken us dumb. There was little conversation. My men received orders to start and to halt merely from a jerk of my eyebrows or a distortion of my lips. All seemed to be doing a severe penance for some common act of youthful indiscretion committed ages ago ; there was neither pardon, nor peace ; and the penance seemed to last for ages more. Our heads drooped ; there was a dull, continued pain in the shoulders ; the flesh hung loose from the frame ; our mouths opened uncontrolledly at every waft of warm air which we gulped down. We had found the very "abomination of desolation."

We had covered as many as 56 kmts. that day. After supping on a young gazelle, which we were obliged to kill during the journey, all laid down to make the most of a hard-earned rest. At midnight all of a sudden we were disturbed by a loud yelling of a camel-mare. The poor beast was bitten by a horned viper in the leg. With tremendous difficulty we subjected her to our control ; maddened by extreme agony, she tossed on the ground as if electrified, and kicked in the air, and threw stones like pellets. My men made a deeper incision on

the leg where she was bitten, injected a good quantity of the serum we had, covered it with permanganate of potash, and carefully bandaged it.

The Arabs, when confronted with such a calamity, usually give up the case as hopeless, confiding only in "maktoob" or destiny. When passing through the west coast of Africa I learned an ingenious system of treating the diseased, which is simply this : if a man has been confined to the bed (or shall we not say, confined to the *ground* ?), for several days, his fellows take him to a least frequented spot in the neighbourhood, there dance around him an hour or two, and, after keeping something to eat sufficient to last him about four days, they all withdraw. If the man recovers in that time, he returns to his native village ; if he does not, well then, four days is a very long time for his fellows to remember anything of him.

CHAPTER IV

THE TIRATIMIR PASS—TIFINIR INSCRIPTIONS—THE
GORGE OF ARAAK OR THE HOUSE OF DEVILS—ENTRY
INTO THE HOGGAR

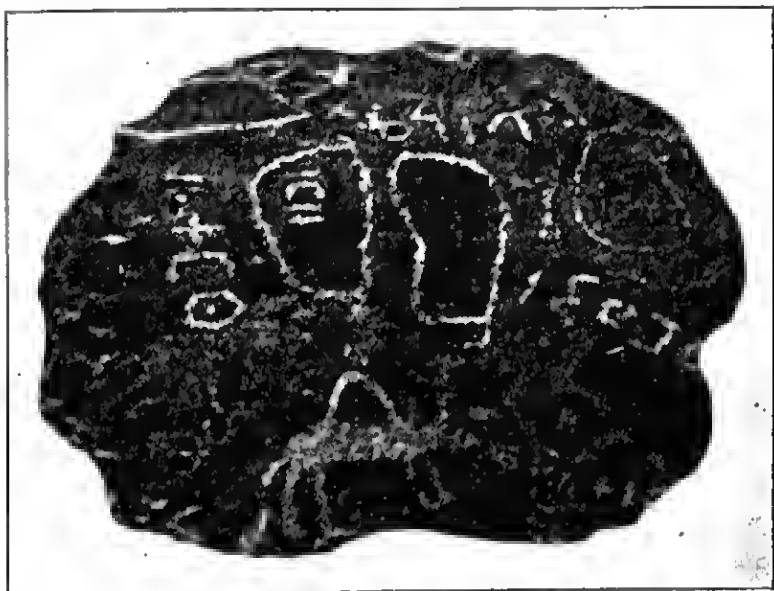
THE TIRATIMIR PASS

WE were now trailing along the historic Tiratimir Pass. On one side stretched for miles a high wall of black stone, entirely covered with inscriptions. The language of the inscriptions is the Tamahaq, although the characters are of the Tifnir (Tifinar) alphabet. The inscriptions belong to the pre-historic age.

They were chiefly the figures of snakes (reminding us very much of the hieroglyphics of the ancient Egyptians), and of bulls or buffaloes ; those of the camel were comparatively few. Some were mere "circles" roughly carved out, while on the higher slopes of the stone walls we noticed the footprints of various sizes. The footprints are said to be the symbols of marriage pacts. The inscriptions are of course far from being clear cut ; and in some

places they appeared to have been made actually one over another, thus proving the antiquity of the Tiratimir Pass.

We had a pleasant time elucidating these ever-



STONE INSCRIPTION TIFINIR PASS
(Hand Drawing)

lasting "Scriptures" of the Libyans, with the help of our guides. The theme of the inscriptions was chiefly love and matrimony. There were many "Only loves," many "faithfuls unto death," and "my alls"; many sympathetic messages of love,

and many plaints of reconciliation which judging from the stones on which they were written, might hardly have been read by the parties concerned.

One inscription in particular, cast into a favourable corner of the Pass, drew our attention. The letters were remarkably clear cut, and the surface of the stone on which they were inscribed was first well flattened out before using—perhaps the only instance of good workmanship among the thousands of inscriptions our guides could show. The stone bore the names of the author and his cherished bride ; beneath these were a bull's head carefully worked out and a kind of small dagger with evidently a ring at the hilt.

From the Tiratimir Pass we marched on to Tajmout (Tadmout). We were rapidly running short of water, and a day or two of unforeseen delay in the desert without water might prove very afflictive, if in no way fatal. Tajmout was 40 kmts. ahead ; but as we rapidly pushed forward, in less than seven good English hours of non-stop marching—from 2 a.m. to 9 a.m.—we arrived there. At Tajmout we came across the first well of sweet water after leaving Ain Salah, i.e. after seven days.

Here we found a couple of French officers living in a large tent made entirely by themselves out of

animal skins. There was hardly any sign of life, as it appeared to me, in a radius of at least half a mile. The only vegetation was a kind of wild grass, shooting as much as six feet from the ground, and half a dozen date palms.

I asked my men to relieve the camels at once, to let them rest a while and then to water them. Hardly had I sat down to rest under the officers' tent when a native of Tajmout, as black as Indian ebony came up and told them that one of his relatives, named Balmir had just died as a result of a scorpion-bite. One of the officers quietly brought out a large sand-filled book and noted down the information with just as much unconcern as a city municipal officer in a busy birth registration office. The officer was so much inclined to be silent that, as I noticed, he was not in the least moved even by our arrival. He quietly closed the book, and beckoned the native to leave the tent. Hoping to learn something about the native village of Tajmout, I told the man to lead me to the place where Balmir was lying.

About a bow-shot from our tent was a small cluster of round huts roughly grouped together in a circle. Outside one of these, I saw a small congregation of remarkably stout, ignorant yet devoted men plainly seized with grief. When they saw me approach Balmir's hut, very reverently they

made room for me. The hut was entirely made of stout bamboos thickly overlaid with grass. Poor Balmir ! It never occurred to him that the very " walls " of his hut might nurse and foster legions of scorpions and other nipping insects. In the brief space of five hours his life was brought to an end.

Not far from his hut a grave was dug out by the devoted villagers. According to the custom of the faithful, with his face towards holy Mecca poor Balmir went into the grave, and the mocking sands closed over him.

While returning to the tent of the two officers, I could not well surmise how they (and also many others at places neither worse nor any better than this), could have been tempted to forsake a happier life in their own country in preference to this wild uninhabitable place, but that it was to hide their various antecedents. Nor was this an irrelevant conjecture. A little more acquaintance with them revealed to me the fact that most of these officers came of a questionable parentage ; and being in their prime of youth, remarkably proficient in swindling, swash-buckling, skirmishing, and the other allied arts, they had qualified themselves for a post in one of the remotest corners of human habitation, through the agency of the French Legion, on agreement for a period of not less than ten years.

THE HOUSE OF DEVILS

The next day we were in the midst of a stony desert. Our track lay no longer through fine sand or small pebbles but through huge boulders which were often found to be heaped together in cairns. Once or twice as we were making our way past these, the stones heavily rolled down near us though fortunately we always came off safe.

This place is named the Gorge of Araak, or Château des Djinns—the House of Devils. It certainly had a terrifying aspect. Each one of the large black stones seemed to tell its own tale of woe. We had gone about 30 kmts. that day. We halted for the night near the base of a large rock which we were to cross the next day.

Suddenly the dead silence of the night was broken by a loud report which came from the rock raising its multiple echoes in all quarters, perhaps to remind us that we had trespassed into the House of Devils. Immediately there came another loud report, as if from a sixty pounder ; the Gorge of Araak opened its batteries against us with frequently recurring intervals, and at one moment the whole rock actually appeared to be moving bodily in our direction. The Arabs raised piercing yells invoking the gods to keep us from the devils. The prayers

must have been heard, for not one devil ventured to come near us !

Although the Arabs attribute the phenomenon of the Gorge of Araak to the Djinns, or devils, we may explain it away as simply this : the stones of the rock which have been greatly heated during the day are sharply broken asunder at night on account of a great fall in the temperature. Sometimes they break and fall down very rapidly so that the rock seems to be advancing bodily.

When the Château des Djinns is seized with such devilry (which is always at night, and particularly so when accompanied by the bleak winds of the desert), the traveller is completely overpowered. I can well imagine to-day the faces of the terror-stricken Arabs who, at that odd moment, must have run cold with perspiration, though I was not less astounded than they. Sometimes the thick darkness of the desert lends itself very agreeably to augment the dreadfulness of the place.

During the next two days we covered about 110 kmts. passing through Amsir and Memet. Both these places had water-wells though they were completely dry. On the third day we touched Tornou on our way. Tornou also had a dry water-well ; but near it was a tolerably large figure of a bull carved out in stone. There is hardly any evidence as to the antiquity of this work ; but

when one actually sees it as it stands in the ruins of ages, it is enough to set one thinking about the wondrous Pyramids and the awful Sphinx.

This figure of the bull was very much like one of those inscribed in the Tifinir Pass, although it stood not less than 250 kms. from it. The general feature of these carvings is a sort of an "unfinished" state in workmanship: the legs and the tail of the animal are usually small in proportion with the body as if these parts of the body—being generally neglected till the moment the more important parts were worked out had been either left incomplete or completed too abruptly.

The following day we came up to Ain Eker; this was the last hamlet in the Tidikelt district. We were now to enter into the heart of the Great Sahara, into the land of the mysterious Tuaregs. We rested long under the shade of the two only palms which Ain Eker possesses (in addition to a fresh water well), as I did not like to make any appearances of having been way-worn or in any way slovenly before the Tuaregs who otherwise might mistake me for their sure victim.

At last we entered into Ain Amgal (Inamgal), the first village of the Hoggar district. It is from here that the influence of the Tuaregs begins to be felt. I was not at all sure how we might be treated at their hands, and was in fact quite unable

to conceal my surprise and joy when the chief of the village received us with gifts from the animal as well as the vegetable kingdoms : one live goat, one cock and one plumpy lambkin ; a basketful of tomatoes, fourteen eggs of a very small size, an ostrich egg, and a musk-lemon weighing at least 45 lbs.

With a view to inform the chief that I had accepted his tributes with great pleasure, I cut open the "forty-five pounder" and distributed it to the children who by this time had already begun to trifle with our bicycles and pack-saddles. And at this time a happy accident did much to create in the people very friendly feelings for us. It was this.

Some of the children were playfully examining our bicycles. One of them, a girl of eight or nine, had her fingers near the cog-wheel, while her playmate turned the pedal with his hands, with the result that he gave her a pair of bleeding fingers. The poor girl came crying to our tent (she looked more beautiful than before). I cleaned the tiny wounds, carefully bandaged her fingers and gave her a mugful of water after mixing in it a few crystals of potassium permanganate simply to create an "effect" among the people. This *had* its effect. The people began to believe in my healing powers and, I believe, very soon I would

have been charming away "gout, gravel, stone and asphalt" with a mere touch of my hands, but for two reasons ; there were not many sick in Ain Amgal, and we did not stay there more than a day.



[Photo de l'Ossalat—Alger]

WOMEN OF HOGGAR

After two days of marching we reached 'Tit, the second village of the Hoggar district in our route. The Tuareg chief of this village also laid before us animal and vegetable gifts like his fellow in Ain Amgal. The places here do not seem to be wanting

in fertility as we are likely to imagine them to be. And yet, strictly speaking, Ain Amgal, Tit and their adjoining districts are desert places.

Three days of further marching from Tit, during which we covered nearly 150 kmts., brought us to Tamanrasset, the capital town of the Hoggar.

CHAPTER V

IN THE COUNTRY OF THE TUAREGS—THE PEOPLE OF
THE VEIL—THEIR LIFE AND CUSTOMS—THE AMÉNOKAL
—ANOTHER STORM—SEARCH FOR WATER—AN
ORIENTAL BARGAIN—IN MUSSA—THE TUAREG CAMP
—TUAREG WOMEN—ADIEU TO THE TUAREGS

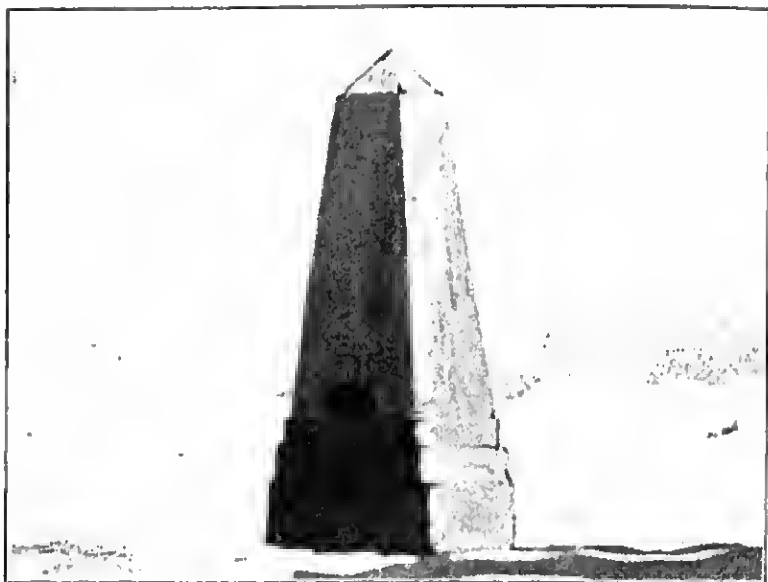
IN TAMANRASSET

WE were received in the Fort Lapperine of Tamanrasset, a building of such design, position and equipment as to render itself convertible into a fort, a church, a mechanic's shop, an officer's mess, or a "Café Tamanrasset" in less than an hour's notice. During my stay, it was rather deprived of its extensive paraphernalia, regalia and insignia, and was doing only the offices of a dispensary, a barrack, a wireless station, a guest-house, a storeroom, and a residential quarter for one adjutant with six French soldiers and a doctor.

Outside the Fort an obelisk marks the final

resting places of General Lapperine and Rev. Charles de Foucauld.

There were also the graves of a few other French



THE OBELISK NEAR FORT LAPPERINE
(Hand Drawing)

officers and three Mahomedan soldiers all of whom had fallen during the Great War.

We were obliged to halt at Tamanrasset for a whole week, as arrangements for camels, guides and provisions had to be made. Every day large

numbers from distant quarters flocked in to see our bicycles ; and, according to the testimony of the officers, in the history of Hoggar, we were the first to introduce bicycles there. The Tuareg chief of Hoggar, the Aménokal, with his large family (consisting mainly of the feminine stock like a typical domestic establishment of the Orientalist), and conscious of his dignified presence, stalked in pompously, quite prepared to thrill every fibre of his great being with the sight of a pair of fragile wheels which could carry me from one end of the world even to the other ! I entertained His Chiefship with an exhibition ride, and would have successfully moved him to enjoy it himself ; but, seeing that he was decked in long, trailing robes, and also that he " was a little in flesh," I did not tempt him.

But the women of his house were as importunate as the horse-fly. Our bicycles seemed to have enthralled their imagination more completely than the wonderful lamp of Aladdin. They looked upon them with mingled awe and admiration, and probably thought there must have been something—maybe, some jinn—behind the mere iron frame and wheels that could carry their owner to any desired corner of the world.

Every evening was thus spent in riding the bicycles before the motley crowds of Tamanrasset

who came, one and all, to see their first wonder of the world ! We passed a week of gala evenings although in the desert and were an unexpected source of income to the poor wretched pedlars and fruit vendors. Even in the scorching heat of day, several Tuareg maidens would come to us, conveying a mute appeal through their eager eyes (and watchful ways) to "give them a ride." The "ride" of course implied our running after them, and that, on account of the shifting sands beneath and the changeless sun above, was not easy, however buxom our charge might have been ! My friend Gustav, at a moment when the thermometer of his patience and endurance was at its lowest, let a plump creature fall almost with a crash ; the others smartly caught the hint and never ventured to ask for a "ride" again !

One evening, half a dozen Tuareg maidens arranged a tea-party in the garden of Fort Lapperine for our entertainment, when a couple of young French officers obliged us as interpreters. Large Arabian carpets were spread on the ground ; we squatted on the central carpet which had an exquisite design of an Arab encampment with a few camels woven into its texture. Soon a large hissing teakettle was placed in the centre, and a young lady poured out the tea into porcelain cups (thanks to the officers of Fort Lapperine)—a piping hot

concoction least suited to bring cheer or give solace.

Between every sip, our kind hostesses wished to know whether or not we liked their Tamanrasset, and where we came from, and where we were going, and whether they could have a bicycle in exchange of one camel or two or three, and such like questions that came readily to their simple minds aided by a sweet nature.

Another young woman now poured out tea—for a second course ; I was passing inwardly a strong censor against the detestable drink when smilingly she informed me of the custom among the Tuaregs to drink thrice ; no honourable guest was ever offered a single course ; to drink only twice was an affront to the host, while the kind of ordeal of three complete courses that I was undergoing was the recognised standard of good breeding. I gulped down a second cup, and soon a third was over, when the climax came. "I am sure," she said, "you must have liked the tea." I praised—the design on the carpet over which we were seated.

THE TUAREGS

The Tuaregs are at once the most romantic and the most mysterious people of the world. Their

romance is more natural and more thrilling than any enacted on the silver screens of Hollywood. Their



A TUAREG WARRIOR

(Notice the sign of the Cross emblazoning the middle of the shield)

mystery is great ; indeed, it may prove unfathomable, since they are the " People of the Veil " ;

and what shall we say of a people whose mysterious incognite begins from the black veils under their restless eyes !

The Tuareg man is always veiled—eating, sleeping, bathing or fighting ; the woman never. One can never guess the origin of the veil or its *raison d'être*. The only plausible argument in favour of its use may be that it offers protection of the face against the blistering heat of the desert. But it is extremely doubtful that a wholly defiant, proud and haughty race, accustomed for generations to the blaze of the sun, should ever stoop to seek such protection. The Tuareg himself could no more account for the persistence of his mysterious veil than you could tell the number of grains in a bag by simply smelling at it.

The life of the Tuaregs is in every respect adjusted to the resources of their desert inhabitation as adequately as the eye adapts itself to light or darkness. Their chief occupation (particularly till the Great War) being only to raid the other tribes of the desert, naturally they, in their turn, are subject to similar depredatory incursions from them. Thus, like good scouts, they have always to "be prepared." Their chief, the Aménokal, when in emergency, beats the tom-tom that rends the ghastly stillness of the desert air for miles around ; and in a few moments, the stalwart Tuaregs may be seen

issuing forth from every quarter on horse, on camel, and even some running on the loose sands. In order, therefore, to be prepared for such emergencies, the dress of the Tuaregs is, day and night, the same loose and trailing garment of black colour. Even the dress of the Tuareg women is eternally black.

Again, it is natural to expect an habitation near a source of water. To baffle their enemies in their guess the Tuaregs never live within the neighbourhood of a water well or a river, and are therefore always under the necessity of crossing and recrossing a few good English miles every day for the sake of water—a task which must greatly help them to maintain the same dogged tenacity of their ancestors.

Instances are not at all wanting to prove the strength, endurance and the Spartan courage of the Tuaregs. They have so much inured themselves to the privations of desert marching that it is not uncommon for a Tuareg to finish off a long journey on foot when, due to sheer exhaustion and the killing thirst of days together, his camel has died. Truly, he is the son of the desert—if the proud Sahara would deign to have any ! He is born in the hot, stifling sands by the camel's side ; he defiles the sands with raid and with pillage, with love and with terrible revenge, with the blood of men and of

camels : and he dies in the same sands wherein his " loves and shames are begotten and buried, his first slime and ancestral dust."

I have often wondered whether a complete description of the 'Tuaregs can possibly be given. Their practices and principles are so very volatile that it is often a problem to the stranger to decide whether a 'Tuareg is in passion or at peace ; and the ordeal does not end in knowing that he is at peace, as now the stranger's more disquieting conjecture is the possibility of his darting into a murderous rage—the 'Tuaregs are often all fire, though without passion, and not less often, all passion though without fire.

We may not enter into the details of the origin of this extremely interesting race, for the reason that this is a matter of much controversy, and even to-day there is a diversity of opinion about it with hardly any promise of true revelations. According to the researches of the scientist-explorers of the Sahara, the Tuaregs are the descendants of the ancient line of Berbers. Speaking from ethnological (and philological) points of view, the representative traces of the ancient Berber are yet found in these free " People of the Veil."

It is true that a people of one and the same country, united by common ties of cognate

languages or political institutions but inhabiting different territories were formerly, as even now in some places, differently named. (The early Romans gave different names, such as Numidians, Mauretanians, Gaetulians, etc., to their African contemporaries because, although they descended from one stock, they were inhabiting different parts of the "Dark Continent"). Partly due to this incoherent system of nomenclature, but greatly due to their lack of racial preservation, the ancient line of the Berbers has been effaced out by its own numerous branches. Thus the descendants of this line in the recesses of Mount Atlas are even to-day known by the same name (Berbers); in Tunis they are known as Kabyles; in the neighbourhood of Mount Aures these descendants of the one great line are named Showiah; while in the Central Sahara, the same are called the Tuaregs, who call themselves *Imazighen* — "the noble people."

While the Tuaregs in their dialect and in their social customs show a marked affinity to ancient Berber yet some of their habits are so characteristically "modern" that it is difficult to say why they should adhere to some of the rude practices and principles of their forefathers.

Our stay amongst the Tuaregs now ended. I was

rather sorry to leave these strangely romantic people just when I had begun to understand them better.

With the necessary equipage we pushed forward from Tamanrasset on the 25th of July and made good 40 kmts. that day. As usual, we slept under the stars. We could easily feel the great range in the temperature : the place that a little while ago was blazing at more than 130° was now actually sending cold draughts of wind.

The next day : hardly had we gone forward 10 kmts. when we saw a mountain of sand in the horizon, making straight for us. The Tuareg escorts, extremely flurried and rather nervous as they appeared to me, cried out, "fi-sha, fi-sha !" (Hurry up, quick, quick !) We immediately alighted ; the Tuaregs unloaded all the camels and bound their legs with strong rope. In less than twenty minutes, we were completely enveloped by the deadly simoom—the occasional hot, arid wind of the Great Desert that raises with it clouds of stifling sands. We sought shelter immediately behind the camels ; the poor animals seemed happily resigned to their fate, for if the storm subjected them to more heat, it also at the same time gave them some rest.

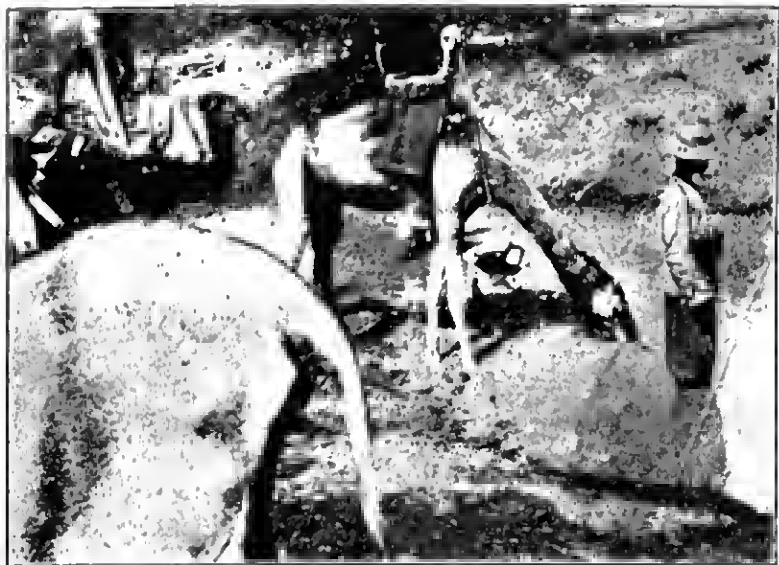
The storm lasted for eight long hours, during which not a few burning particles of sand must

have forced their lodging into our system. The extreme velocity of the particles—at least 40 miles per hour—made fine straight cuts on the skin, particularly on the forehead and the back of the palm. Breathing was not practicable ; at best, we were only panting for breath !

But, they say, the fastest storms are soon overblown. The weird wind fell at last ; the roughened face of the desert relaxed, and the mocking sands lay dead with their passions wholly outspent. Once more, conquering man trampled them triumphantly under foot walking through utter desolation in the sole confidence born of his faith in Him !

“ Another blue day dawned.” The poor animals whom I now began to pity to the extremity of loving them were now doing their third day of penance without either food or water. We made many detours in search of a water-well, but it was not till the following day that we were fortunate enough to alight upon a fairly large hole containing some clean water. My escorts, with very significant gestures of their hands, gave me to understand that they had not found out this blessed spot themselves but had rather been guided to it by the camel-mare (which I was riding), through her sharp sense of smell.

The poor dear beasts were well watered at this place, and fed on what stunted shrubbery the brink of the water-hole could afford. We rested



CAMEL WATERING

here a good while. The very sight of water was enough to keep us bound to it.

Some idea of the severity of the Saharan sun may be had from the fact that, during the journey from Biskra to this place, four of my khaki shirts had been almost entirely bleached white, crumbling

to a powder when I removed them ; while the last shirt that I had now put on had also got " well ventilated " from several places.

We journeyed on. The rocky nature of the desert had subsided, and we were now trailing through endless flats of sand. For three days we kept up the march. On the fourth day—watering day—we found that we had run short of water, and so the poor animals were expected to go on without it. My guides assured me that within the course of the following day we should arrive at a water well. How we had run short of water I could not tell. We always carried enough to last six men for at least six days ; the camels were watered from the wells or small water-holes.

When marching in a desert, we must remember that the higher the pitch of our expectations to find water the greater is sure to be our disappointment. When on the fifth day I told the guides that we had not found the water-well they were speaking of, they assured me that on the next day we should surely find one. But the " next day " came and went and we were the worse by it. All that day we searched for water. Behind every stone we went round to see if there was a trace of it—but useless.

The search for water had completely exhausted

me. For the last two days we were eating half-cooked food on account of the scarcity of fuel. Fortunately, my camel-mare yielded some milk. I tasted it for the first time in my life and never asked for it again, though the Arabs seem to relish it much. The dear, dear camel. She bore our burden through the Great Desert, uncomplaining, uncomforted and unfed. And now when we were starving she fed us with what was her own.

Once again the mighty sun rose and set over us. Camel's milk had become our staple food. I was starving, Gustav was dieting, and the natives were not necessarily thriving—they were just now stoically calm. We were suffering much; we were jeopardized in the vastness of a big desert, so big that it seemed a world by itself. In the broad light of day over wide expanse of the shining sands, the inexorable Sahara seemed to claim us as her own; under the shadows of the night, with her languorous moaning she would bury us into bleak oblivion.

It is at such times that the traveller sees the Great Desert in its true colours, with its changing moods. He is seized with *ennui*. The spirit of solitude comes upon him. Fantastic figures grow out of the fading distance before his dazzled eyes. A thousand cobwebs, each with a thousand clews, rise and fall before him. In vain he tries to grapple

with these. His imagination runs riot. His face aches all over and becomes stiff with a steady but vacant gaze. Suddenly he sees a long line of camels passing before him. He hears the merry jingle of the bells round their necks through the thin air of the desert.

That night how I indulged in the most chimerical thoughts ! Grotesque forms, grinning skulls, weird skeletons feeding themselves on delusions and walking over "airy nothings"—a thousand phantasms called up by my sickly imagination. And then I dreamt of the sun ; how he was carried off in a chariot of seven swans (was it on the ides of August ?), to be married to the moon. And how their children, the stars, began to prick us with sharp needles, and how, like missiles, they threw sand at us. And how, to avenge myself, I gathered all the sand and ducked it in camel's milk. And then I saw :

" In the beginning, how the heavens and
earth
Rose out of chaos "

right from the birth of Time. And all night long I entertained myself with "such sweet visions" of the diabolic species !

The next sunny morning, while I was admiring the mild colours of the horizon, I saw a small

speck on the sands gradually magnifying. I at once recognized it to be a moving body of men, and felt very cheerful at the prospect of seeing some human faces. If company, good or bad, is never to be missed, it is only in such dreary wastes that we fully appreciate its soothing influence. My men, who were preparing for the start in a state of morbid drowsiness, now bustled up and soon we were face to face with the advancing party whom, from their long black garments, I knew to be the Tuaregs.

While the western civilization may have a very prolix code in matters of accosting and apostrophizing or even "cutting short" or totally ignoring an acquaintance, the affable Levantines have no such scruples, and, especially among the desert dwellers, the monotony of their surroundings and also, in general, the tedium of their way of life are so very acute as to make them very accostable and courteous, and poor as they are, even hospitable, in all cases, where suspicion does not poison their feeble minds. But unfortunately the scarcity of resources, the sting of poverty and, above all, frequent ill-treatment from foreign intruders have so thoroughly scared these people that each one looks on his fellows as so many encumbrances to his own happiness and on a stranger as his murderer.

My men opened a cheerful conversation with their new friends, and at once they obliged us with a sufficient quantity of water. Now they entered into that primitive form of making business, so common among these humble people, and known as bartering. We were desirous of exchanging one of our sickly camels for a fine Mehari camel which they had ; and so there followed a very lively disputation between the two parties, the arguments employed being perhaps very much like those which girls use in their school debating societies. The owners, with all their vehemence and vivacity, probably asserted the excellent virtues of a fine Mehari camel, and said that, allowing for the several ears of rice that (we ought not to forget), were also to accompany the bargain, the stipulated sum of 700 francs could have been only too insignificant. To which, my men, not less verbose and loquacious, replied that considering the fact that our sick camel (which was to be given away in exchange), was only *sick* and not dead, and that they were sure it would recover in a day or two with a little care, or even without it, the demanded sum of 1,500 francs was not only excessive but unconscionably exorbitant.

At last, in less than two hours, the bargain was struck. The poor fellows had at first asked 1,800

francs ; but, at once seeing the absurdity of their blurt, reduced to 1,500 ; though in the end they



[Photo de l'Oulac—Niger

TUAREGS IN WARLIKE RAIMENT

gladly accepted 800. The excellent Mehari camel, and also the decent quantity of rice were our valuable

assets. Fuel permitting, we could now safely "march on our stomachs."

My guides were now telling me that a place called Ain Gazim (Ingazim) was not far off. At the end of about 15 kmts., when we halted under a lonely tree, I asked them how far Ain Gazim was from here. "Why, sir, this *is* Ain Gazim!" was the surprising reply. This was one of the few places I had already passed through, where instead of a sentry I found only a tree, and half a dozen pits in the ground one of which contained some turbid water.

Our only trail now lay through long stretches of forests of the babul wood (*acacia arabica*). The babul generally abounds in the extreme west of the Sahara, nearer to Senegambia, and supplies the so-called gum-arabic. Almost at very regular intervals of 10 to 12 kmts. we were passing through these dry forests.

It was the fifth day of our new Mehari camel. We were resting in the camp as usual. Suddenly my eyes fell on a buxom African antelope grazing on the scanty pasture of the jungle, less than a hundred yards from us. Before I had fully admired the sprightly animal one of my men sent a bullet in its leg and, I thought, had lamed it. The animal, however, seemed to be mustering up courage for an attack. Two more shots were

fired again at its legs, as we did not want to mutilate the body. Suddenly, bending its head forward,



[Photo de l'Ofalar—Alger]

TUAREG WOMAN

the desperate creature charged straight at the new Mehari with a terrific swiftness. At once two

more shots were fired in its head—but my camel had already received a single straight horn in its paunch. In a few minutes both the animals lay dead.

This antelope belonged to the *Hippotragina* species which have horns in either sex. Even the Sahara furnishes us two kinds: the long-haired and spiral horned addax and the straight horned oryx. The Arabs know them by the name of *Coba* (or *Koba*, from *Cobus*), and use their hides for making shields, wine skins, saddles and sometimes even small tents. Our game was of the oryx class; but it cost us 800 francs. Each of its horns was 95 centimetres long.

We feasted heartily on the antelope that night. The next morning, very scrupulously I doled out the loads to the rest of the animals and we pressed forward with haste. Our path lay through a nearly dead-level stretch of sand, with this additional comfort that the sands were not deep and thus afforded a rapid going.

The acacia woods continued appearing at every ten or twelve kilometres, and we often took shelter in them, particularly when they provided some grazing to the camels. The nature of the soil continued unaltered for three days during which

we made good as many as 180 kmts. Mussa was now only 30 kmts. ahead.

The next morning we were greeted by a couple of Tuareg camelcers, who were sent by the "King"



[Photo de l'Ofalac—Alger]

THE AMÉNOKAL (THE TUAREG KING OF SAHARA) WITH HIS NOBLES

of Mussa to escort us into his territory. (Many readers will wonder how these kingships may have come to be assigned or their frontiers demarcated ; but even to-day we know extremely little of these "Knights of the Desert," and much less of their

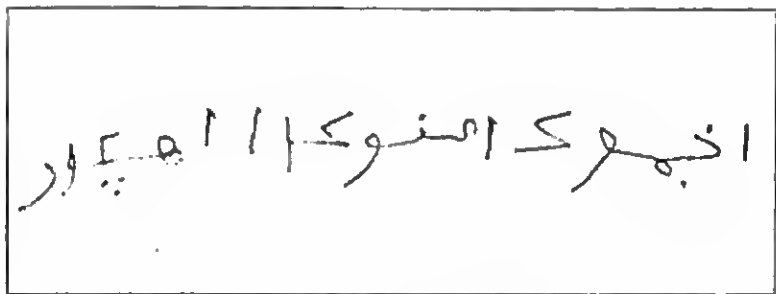
curious principles and practices.) The king's escorts conveyed the message to my men; and the latter, after an undue strain on their philological attainments and by dint of the most comical gesticulations, at last succeeded in informing me that the Aménokal (the King) was eagerly awaiting our arrival in his dominions. Soon we marched up into Mussa.

The weird sounds of the serpent (oriental musical instrument) announced our arrival. The Aménokal, on horseback, hailed us with solemn dignity—he immediately ordered a goat to be killed in honour of his distinguished visitors; and we seemed to claim a golden page in the annals of the Aménokal's life-history.

His camp was the exact type of the oriental Kabilah. (In fact, the Kabyles who belong chiefly to the agricultural class of the Berber race, are named from the term Kabilah which means a large family, society or union). At first sight, the whole camp looked very much like an "anthropo-zoological" museum: camels, goats and horses; young ladies, many with fair and very engaging appearances, sword and lance and shield; the stalwart Tuaregs in black veils; little children in one corner and their friends, the cows and the lambs, in the other—an extraordinary assemblage!

The Aménokal, indeed, possessed a miniature

artillery and infantry, and even a cavalry of about 30 horses and a *camelcade* of more than 50 strong ! His camp was entirely made up of camel and antelope hides ; and the entrance was decorated by a massive braid of camel's hair with a skill that was a clear index to the refined taste of these little known descendants of some white race.



AUTOGRAPH OF THE AMÉNOKAL

I will never forget the pleasure of having been with them : garbed in their long black robes, with brawny foreheads, brown, lustrous eyes and black masks concealing handsome features so apt in such robust frames, the Tuaregs formed indeed a stately group. If they had not the splendour and the pomp of an oriental durbar, at least, their camps reverberated with their tales of valour and with their women's professions of virtue. The

beauty of the Tuareg woman is not infrequently captivating enough to "hold mighty hearts in her slender chains."

She has a complexion of the finest grain ; flaxen hair, eyes of a mild blue, a straight nose (perhaps of her Greek ancestors), high cheekbones and sweetly parting lips. One of the maidens of the Aménokal's court was truly a favoured child of Beauty, buoyant in her first and full flush of radiant health. I noticed several ambitious Tuaregs in the camp, frequently stealing a sight of her—and how well she juggled with her eyes !

For truly beautiful she was ; "beautiful and as fair as the full moon," as one of my guides said to me (perhaps not without disappointment !). Her golden hair fell gently in corkscrew curls ; the broad high forehead betokened the liberality and the large heartedness of a really sweet nature ; and the thin fiery eyebrows disposed you to a wilful submission, without making herself supercilious or bold. How many a young Tuareg heart leaped with love at the sight of those dark piercing, mischievous eyes ! The sweet compound of smiles and blushes—there she sat in the middle of the tent, the little queen of the Great Desert, the smiling statue of the Aménokal's court, the saint-seducing nymph of the Sahara.

We dined to the accompaniment of their music,

while some women of the court obliged the company with songs. The language of the Tuaregs is not wanting in tongue-twisters and jaw-breakers (though, I believe, such at least is always a man's first impression of any foreign language); when spoken rapidly, the sound of it is very much like what you get by rolling a few stones in an oil-can. (When I was the guest of a very respectable lady in San Francisco, I remember, she gravely complained to me of her husband's addiction to drink, and said that what troubled her more was his flat denial of the charge. I told her that next time if she wanted to prove to her husband that he *was* drunk or (which is a more gentlemanly way of putting it), that he was not quite sober, she could do it easily; and for that purpose I prescribed to her only three sentences of the Tuareg language which I asked her to study well herself. As soon as her husband came home, she was to recite them loudly before him and ask him to simply repeat the same. If he could do it without dislocating his jaw or his tongue, to be sure he was quite sober. She agreed to try this method. (Note. Two days later, before detecting her husband, she came complaining to me of a strong pain in the jaw !)

The Tuaregs do not number more than about 6,000 at the most; almost all of them are centred in the Hoggar and extremely few are scattered

abroad. In spite of their very naturally inevitable *esprit de corps*, it is clear that these fascinating people are suffering a gradual extermination with the advancement of foreign influences, and in time will be totally obliterated or, at least, so changed as to be completely bereaved of their truly romantic lives in the heart of the Great Desert.

Our bicycles had created a lively enthusiasm in the whole of Mussa. The sprightly women of the camp eagerly begged of us to "train them in the art," like their neighbours of Tamanrasset. (All our conversation was done through my Tuareg guide who knew some broken French.)

Although Mussa is not quite as big as Tamanrasset, I found that our time was more happily spent here than at Tamanrasset. Perhaps, one reason for this was that by this time the bond of friendship between us and these mysterious people was strengthened. I believe them to be frank and affable, but the mysterious veil promptly restrains a stranger from making any advances, and often makes him more suspicious than the Tuaregs themselves.

It was time for us now to depart from Mussa. Almost the whole population accompanied us up to the outskirts of their little country. The Aménokal sat on a grey charger; dressed in a long black robe, with a black *litham* (the veil, or better,

a kind of "shawl-muffler"), in one hand his favourite broadsword emblazoned with the Cross, in the other the reins of his mettlesome horse, he formed an imposing figure. By his side rode his young son, seemingly eager, by his ardent nature to spur ahead of the company, but constantly checked by his parent's dignified presence. We pedalled abreast with the Aménokal; and the women of his camp followed behind in howdahs mounted on camels.

The howdah is a canopied seat on the back of an elephant or a camel. It is always decorated with oriental taste : four short poles wrapped in multi-coloured ribands support a tawdry umbrella, fringed with silver threads and tinsels and fillets. A curtain descends from each of the four sides of the umbrella and thus the howdah looks more like a cage than a canopy—like a cage particularly, if you judge from the song-bird within who always rolls out some strange ditties, every alternate second for two seconds at a stretch. She pushes aside the curtain in front of her, and smiles *down upon* you from the airy heights of the howdah with the patronising air of an "elevated" being.

Young Tuaregs followed the howdahs (perhaps previously selected !) ; then came the children of all Mussa ; and cows and goats and dogs brought up the rear !

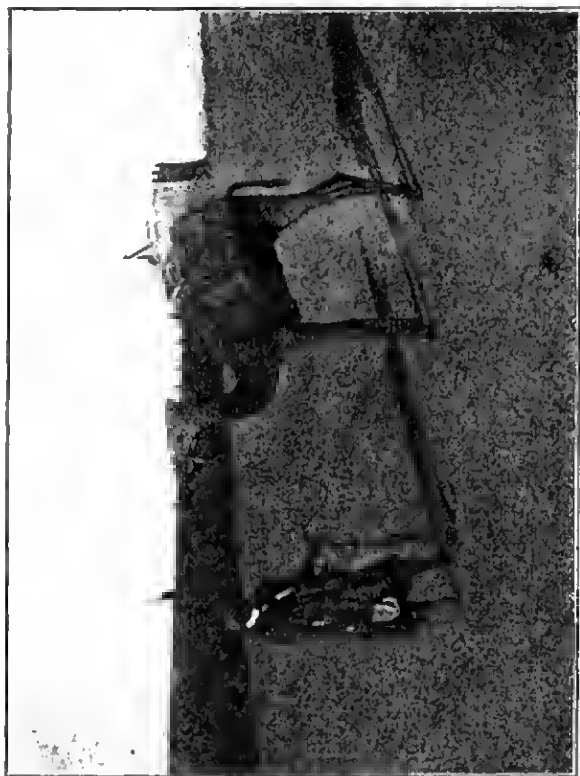
Often Gustav would ride very close to one of the howdah bearing camels so as to frighten the occupant above. If a camel went astray, or even so much as out of the line, immediately a dog would start barking till it came into its line. Thus we smiled away three to four kmts.

Near a shady spot, the Aménokal dismounted; a Tuareg led up a fine Mehari camel to him. The king, with his benevolent eyes beaming over the dark veil, gave me the fleet-footed Mehari as a gift from his tribe. He took my hands in his and pressed them against his eyes and forehead—a sign to indicate eternal friendship. Likewise my hands felt the warmth of every young Tuareg. Gustav went through the same process.

The formal ceremonies being over, a young Tuareg handed a waterskin to the Aménokal from which his lordship drank a little and passed it on to me. This was, as I guess, strictly connected with the rites of his tribe and was given to us not as any measure of precaution against the long trail that lay before us but somewhat in the nature of wishing us a *bon voyage*. We gratefully acknowledged his generous gift of the camel by bowing before him. The women-folk screamed sweetly a song and smiled. The little queen of the Great Desert opened a curtain of the howdah and

murmured something like a soft peal of silver bells coming from a distance and we parted.

The dear, dear unfortunate people! The mysterious Sahara is their womb, but none the less their tomb also.



MY GUIDE NEAR AGADES

CHAPTER VI

IN AGADES—TARDIWELL'S TROUBLE—THROUGH
ANIMAL KINGDOMS—THE BAMBOULA

IN AGADES

ON our entrance into Agades the officers shot us from different directions—with their cameras; the sight of a new face naturally relieves them for a while from the extreme monotony of their lives. The negroes looked with dumb surprise at the bicycles—they might have taken us to be in league with the devil, as otherwise we should have been long since buried under the eternal sands.

As soon as we approached the officers' quarters, Gustav fainted and fell down heavily. We carried him inside and a medical officer, who fortunately was residing here at the time, attended. He injected a quantity of coconite, and soon Gustav recovered. The doctor declared that the fit was due to his sudden entrance into shade after a long exposure to the strong heat of the desert.

Considering the resources of a desert land, the diet of the officers may well be termed epicurean,

though the very first course of their dinner is invariably a quinine pill or (for variety, I believe), a



NEARING AGADES

ready made mixture of quinine in water. We always had four qualities of French wines in addition to the usual *grandes champagnes* ; and

ostrich eggs always formed a much favoured delicacy of the table.

Though the ostriches are fairly numerous in the Sahara, during our journey we saw them but rarely. The egg of the ostrich weighs nearly three pounds, and contains even more than 15 times as much matter as a hen's egg, and has a very delicious flavour. The ostrich itself weighs about 300 pounds and reaches a height of nearly 8 feet. The Bedouins hunt these birds in the desert on dromedaries for the sake of their feathers.

Though it is a flightless bird, the ostrich uses its short wings for an entirely different purpose. It is extremely fleet-footed, often running at 25 miles an hour, and even more. When pursued by the hunter, it runs at a terrific speed, and if a breeze is blowing, suddenly raises a wing sailwise which enables it to change its course or double quite abruptly in spite of the high speed. "In the Sahara," Canon Tristram tells us, "It is ridden down on horseback, a method of capture which the Saharan sportsmen regard as the greatest feat of hunting."

Among the officers in Agades was one very young French Sergeant, Tardiwell by name. (The "statistics" concerning the ostrich given above, including a reference to Canon Tristram are due to Tardiwell's interest in the ostrich as well as in

me I). He requested us often to visit him in his "bunk," as he styles his apartments. On the third day of our stay, we went. The "bunk" was decorated with even feminine taste: a pair of antelopes' heads hanging on opposite walls were draped with such nicety and care as nothing but the miraculous touch of a woman's hand alone can do. I found that this gay sergeant had been maintaining a "tame" menagerie in the rear part of his "bunk," consisting of rabbits and squirrels, monkeys, parrots and cats and dogs, a pair of young antelopes and another beautiful one of ostriches.

Tardiwell entertained us with wine and songs on the guitar, and pressed us to dine with him that night. We did not refuse; but I asked him to inform the Commanding Officer about it. The enthusiastic but ignorant Tardiwell ordered, however, his servant to prepare dinner for three and also gave orders in the Officers' Mess not to cook for us. The mess-man reported the matter to the Commanding Officer, and Tardiwell was called upon to explain.

He (Tardiwell) said that there was nothing wrong in what he had done, since we were "none of those official guests." For this he was very severely reprimanded (in our presence, unfortunately), and, out of compassion for poor Tardiwell, I tried to

persuade the Officer that it was only as a result of his extreme eagerness to treat a guest or two in his "bunk" (the Officer looked up, and Tardiwell was red in the face), that he had thus chanced to commit any offence. But the Officer was all the more enraged, and began to explode before us the big mountain of Tardiwell's similar impertinences ever since he was posted to Agades. That night, however, we were Tardiwell's guests.

We were obliged to stay at Agades for every day we were expecting a despatch from Algiers. Agades has a population of about ten thousand. It receives a good amount of rain during summer, but the cultivation of the land is much neglected. The houses are almost all made of mud, some of them having an upper storey. I found not a few houses, apparently habitable, were entirely abandoned by their owners (or rather builder-owners), while in some there was only a straggling cow or an ass. Agades was formerly a halting place of caravans as it is situated exactly on the route between Murzuk and Sokoto, though now it is getting into less and less favour.

After nearly a week we received our despatches of mail and money. We were quite weary of the stay, and so on the same day, having equipped ourselves as usual (but with only one sumpter-

camel), we left Agades on bicycles, 30th August, 1926, for Zinder.

When, at the time of planning my itinerary of the world tour, I entered the words "from Algiers—Hoggar—to Nigeria," I was under the impression that the most formidable aspects of a desert were only its extreme heat and scarcity of water, and that if one could stand these, all other difficulties of crossing a desert were insignificant; and, in fact, I was almost disappointed when I found this impression of mine to be more or less true till we reached Tuggart; though, by the time we were in the country of the Tuaregs, I had already begun to realise my mistake. But we did not believe that graver trials might yet be in store for us, as the Great Desert was now fast receding.

After leaving Agades, the first 20 kmts. were passed through safely. At the fall of the evening we stayed in the temporary hut of a Tuareg who was on the way to his country, having come from Zinder,—a man, judging only from the intermittent twinkles of his eyes (as his face is veiled), fit to be your host, your guide and your grave-digger. But this one was a thorough gentleman although a Tuareg.

It was no longer necessary for us now to start very early in the morning as so far we were accustomed to do, because the heat of the country was

less oppressive. But, on the next day, we were troubled by occasional showers of rain, till at last, after doing 20 knts., we were obliged to stop for the night under the shelter of a big acacia tree.

Our track now lay through very rocky soil and the nature of the land continued unaltered for three days, during which we covered nearly 80 knts. After this, the scene of the country began to change alternately from quagmires and bogs to woody aisles and groves. But passing through both these was difficult : the frequent thunder-showers had made the ground so marshy that the wheels stuck fast into it and walking was at best slip-slop ; while, in the dry forests, the tubes were punctured so often that, as a last resort, we removed them entirely and filled the tyres with plenty of dry grass, which served our purpose much better than we had expected.

If you have ever trespassed into a country of flies and mosquitoes and fleas and ants who are not altogether vegetarian, and who are well known for having their own way at least in such a serious matter as that of their own subsistence, if you have trespassed into a country of such monarchs and, which is worse still, dared to sleep one night in their territories, the next morning you see your ducs meted out to you on every part of your body. One night, I remember, we were forced to sleep in

one such region ; the next morning very gratefully we gathered up our remains and silently marched on.

The second night was still worse. The whole of the place where we were was dotted with ant-hills of huge pyramidal shapes. Moreover, the ants, as if by a sense of smell, were attracted towards us ; so that, if after a great difficulty we found out a place more or less clear of them, very soon they flocked up to us, with the result that every hour we had to change places.

We hardly slept that night. The red ants had by this time cultivated such a delicate taste for our meat that early next morning we set off, and at midday were passing through a long stretch of land covered with dry, prickly grass grown to a height of nearly six feet at some places. At sunset we halted at a place where one might well go to reap a harvest of thorns. At any rate, we were free from the ant-hood.

That night we should have slept well, but for only one reason. At the dead of night we were suddenly startled by the close-resounding roars of a lion. The sound came from within a radius of half a mile, I was sure. Sirappa, our guide, quickly gathered up some grass and set it on fire ; while, to frighten the animal I sent some half a dozen blank cartridges in the air. But this

frightened our camel so much that it tried to run away, and poor Sirappa must have been completely exhausted before he could subject the camel to his control.

In the regions which we were now passing through wild beasts are fairly numerous. At nine in the morning following the incident just narrated, we saw at only forty yards from us, a lion at play with his mate. Gustav sent five bullets straight at them, but with no effect; the merry monarchs of the jungle tripped away lightly. Less than an hour later we saw a small group of giraffes coming towards us. Their heads stood on a level at least 18 feet above the ground. When we see two giraffes in a jungle walking side by side we are suddenly reminded of our three-legged races. In our embarrassment we killed one of them, though afterwards we found the giraffe to be quite as innocent and harmless an animal as the deer. The French Government has forbidden the shooting of these beautiful animals in these regions.

THE BAMBOULA DANCE

It was the seventh day after leaving Agades. We entered into a small negro village, and Sirappa ordered the chief of the village to provide us with food. Immediately a dozen eggs, three fowls and

some goat's milk were laid before us, on which we heartily repasted and were now preparing to lay down for the night.

A large moon, slightly tinged with red, rose gently above the horizon, flooding the conical thatches of the humble villagers with a soft silver light. A muffled clacking like that of a loose windmill was heard in the still air. The noise increased rapidly ; it was the monotonous rapping of the African tom-tom announcing the Bamboula.

Some twenty-five young women, all half clothed, with rusty knives in their hands and, not a few with only sharp splinters of wood, came running and shrieking towards us. We were quickly encircled by them. Half a dozen stout negroes managed the tom-toms, and the females kept up a perpetual yell.

One of them then quickly separated from the group and came into the centre. The rest of the dancers stood still ; the tom-toms grew louder and louder, and the woman in the centre threw herself into such a giddy whirl of the waltz around us that at any moment she occupied almost the whole of the area at her disposal. The tom-toms were now beaten to the breaking point and the savage dance culminated in the most depraved gesticulations of her hands and body. Thoroughly exhausted, she fell on the ground near us.

Immediately the crowd joined in the dance roaring like maddened beasts. The only theme of their song was vile passion ; and every word and every gesture inflamed their debased spirit. At last



THE BAMBOULA DANCERS

the weird dance came to a stop and all the male dancers retired to their huts.

With a piping chorus the females started another "Witches' Dance." At this a smile of gladness spread over Sirappa's face. I began to see some-

thing ghastly in my faithful guide's countenance. The nature of the dance was even more wanton than before. I ordered Sirappa to tell them to stop at once ; but, to my surprise he said that



THE BAMBOULA DANCERS

they wanted something from us. "What?" I questioned. With fearful movements of his hands he gave me to understand that the "witches" wanted to take away as gifts some pieces of my and my companion's body! We, however,

could not accede to such a request, but Sirappa *did*.

In a few minutes I saw him lifted on the shoulders of four females, while the others danced around him frenziedly. He was actually bleeding from several parts of his body, though he did not notice it ; and the wolf of sensual appetite must have carved deeper yet within. He looked at us and laughed—like “an idiot in his glory” ; and that night we witnessed a most mortifying instance of the violence of human passions.

Although I was eager to leave that debauched village as soon as I could, the next morning I ordered Sirappa to ask the Bamboula dancers to come to us again ; I wanted to take their photographs. I gave their leader a franc for the trouble he had in collecting his band of dancers, and took the two accompanying pictures and also two more “in action” which were unfortunately spoiled. Photography particularly in the tropics is both tedious and very unsuccessful on account of the badness of the weather which destroys your films just as much as it affects you.

We were exactly half way between Agades and Zinder. The nature of the country did not change at all. There were the same ant-hills of huge pyramidal shapes, and the same mosquito-breeding pools by the hundred. The ant-hills

seemed to have been even better looked after than so far we knew. Every heap was carefully covered with a mashing of dry grass, to protect it from the



ANT-HILL WORSHIPPER

(The slab bearing the inscription is the altar on which numerous animals are slaughtered as sacrifices to the ants)

African sun perhaps, by the Negroes who worshipped it. Around these heaps very often I found small pieces of metal, charms and amulets, and sometimes even morsels of some catables evidently

left there as so many offerings to the mystic mounds.

The stagnant water pools are the best breeding-places for the larvæ of the dreaded anopheles—the malaria carrying mosquito. By these pools would collect sometimes an amazing number of snakes trying to get as much cool refreshment as is possible in that tropical heat. They positively loathe being disturbed, and are indeed quick to let you know of their quick temper only if they are disturbed, but not otherwise. (I have experienced during the whole of my tour that, with the probable exception of the Bengal tiger in India, all wild animals are terribly scared by the sight of a man, and attack only when molested.)

CHAPTER VII

FROM ZINDER TO KANO—THE JUNGLE FEVER—
REV. RIES—THE JU-JU MEN AND WOMEN—THE
BUNDU SOCIETY—AN AFRICAN THRILLER—THE HO
DANCE—IN KANO

IN ZINDER

WE reached Zinder literally in a feverish state. Gustav and myself were seized with a burning fever between 105° and 105.5° in Gustav's case and 104° in mine. The Government Medical Officer, M. Landru, who visited us twice every day, declared us to be suffering from the African jungle fever.

In a week's time, however, Gustav made considerable progress ; but my condition grew worse every day. Very fortunately for us a Canadian missionary, Rev. Ries—every inch a missionary—was staying in Zinder at that time. Learning from someone that a couple of tourists were seized with fever, he came to pay us a visit. But when he saw that my debility was so very great that I could not even move my tongue to speak, he devoted himself to attend to us day and night.

Rev. Ries, as well as Gustav, had given up all hopes of my recovery. M. Landru, the Medical Officer, talked of sending me to the hospital in Kano ; but, at a second thought perhaps, desisted, as I might have been a corpse only half way.

For three days following the missionary's visit I had not opened my eyes, or made any sign or sound. It is difficult to describe faithfully the feelings of a person stricken with the "jungle fever" of Africa. A terrible feeling of absolute emptiness or vacancy of the mind was torturing me. I felt as if the light iron bed on which I slept was fast falling down through empty space and, in order to save myself, I lay on it quite motionless, and stiff perhaps, for three days. All around was light, light and light ; dazzling blinding light, entering through the eyes and piercing the brain. Simultaneously I felt the floods of light strike the empty space and produce a long, thin din which dinned and dinned in my ears and pierced the brain.

The speed of my falling bed at last seemed reduced. I thought I had reached my journey's end. The din in the ears grew fainter and fainter till at last it died away in the hollow distance carrying away the floods of light with it. Suddenly I felt a pressure within the throat and made a feeble struggle for relief, in which attempt my eyes opened. A dying oil-lamp lit the room in which I lay. I saw a stout

figure crouched on one side of my bed, with a round plate in one hand and a book in the other. I recognised Rev. Ries. He was feeding me—and praying.

“Thank you, Most Reverend Father.” That was all I could say.

A clock hoarsely chimed two. My burning eyes were dimmed with tears of gratitude. Rev. Ries trimmed the lamp and pointed towards Gustav’s bed. My youthful companion, he said, had much improved. Then, with motherly care, he fed me with some milk and egg’s white. All around was dark and dead silence. The room was hot and stuffy ; yet I slept soundly.

I took a fortnight for complete recovery. The “Jungle fever” reduced me by thirty pounds and Gustav by about ten. We were even afraid to stay any longer in Zinder and accordingly made preparations for the departure. His Excellency the Governor of Nigeria (who has his seat in Zinder) gave us a certificate, wherein he declared us to be the first cyclist-tourists to cross the Sahara.

Before the departure I went with Gustav to visit Rev. Ries and once again we thanked him. “That was but my duty,” he said, “and even if it were not, my friends, much good might be done on earth if only people did not care as to who got the credit for it.”

We left Zinder, 30th October, 1926.

FROM ZINDER TO KANO

THE JU-JU MEN—THE BUNDU SOCIETY—AN AFRICAN
THRILLER—IN KANO

Strictly speaking, the desert nature of the Sahara ends at Zinder or even before Zinder. The French Colonie du Niger ends here and the British territory of Nigeria begins. I really should not have continued the narrative of my travel from Zinder to Kano but merely for the sake of giving a kind of completeness to this little volume, as it was from Kano that I changed my course and took to the west coast of Africa.

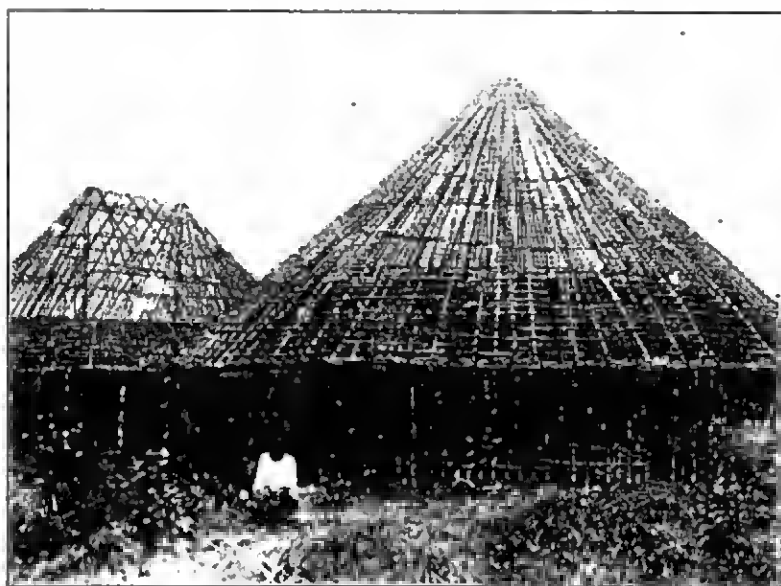
That the few villages coming between Zinder and Kano are intermediate in civilisation between those of the oases and of the west coast can be seen readily from the fact that the people here are more backward in all respects than the desert dwellers but not quite as much primitive savages as those of the west coast. Evil practices of witchcraft (though the degree of their evil effect upon the practitioner and his or her prey might be quite questionable), superstitions, animal and even human sacrifices, and all the attendant evils of these are very rife.

The journey was made through a regular abode of snakes and mosquitoes, scorpions and centipedes ten inches long, black and brown cobras, and the spitting cobra which spits exactly in man's eyes and simply blinds him although it does not kill him ; there were also other kinds of non-poisonous vipers and insects ; and above all there were the ant-hills, well looked after by their special worshippers.

One Negro village does not differ much from its neighbour at a day or two's distance, though both these may be engaged in a perpetual warfare with each other. All the huts rise in a circular shape slightly above a man's height and then taper up to a peak. Several huts are grouped together in a circle, and a fencing of the African strong wood, thickly interpolated with elephant grass, runs right round the village. The huts are often gigantic in size with a population of a hundred teeming men and women and at least twice as many screaming children within each.

Starting from Zinder, it was not before the end of the second day that we came up to a fairly large village. The Negro chief very devoutly looked to all our comforts for the night and on the following morning accompanied us a little distance on our way where a couple of huts were being erected after his "plans."

We reached another such village on the next day. Having just recovered from the "jungle fever" of the Dark Continent, I had no further wish to entertain the mosquito fever within my



NEGRO HUT UNDER CONSTRUCTION

"cell," and so we decided to take a complete day's rest in this village. To be sure, the day was not idly spent.

We were resting under a big tree (which I always selected in preference to the stuffy huts), with all

our bags and baggages deliberately scattered about us and the bicycles standing erect with each other's support in front. This sort of mercantile display of foreign men and foreign goods naturally attracted the natives who flocked in from time to time to steal a look at us ; and thus, I believe, we saw the whole population without having to go round the whole village, a plan which I subsequently adopted in several places throughout the west coast journey very successfully.

We were having a respectable audience from these people just when my eyes fell upon a rather suspicious looking old Negro. He surveyed me critically, distorted his thick lips, looked at Gustav, moved his lips as if he were speaking, again looked at me, muttered something in an audible whisper, then looked again at Gustav and continued muttering. I knew at once that this man was trying to enthrall our very beings by means of his magic spells ! He poured forth his incantations for nearly an hour and then, seeing perhaps the possibility of permanently damaging his established reputation as the biggest magic-monger of his tribe in case he failed to strike us dead or at least dumb, swift like a lizard he slipped away taking advantage of the crowd.

Throughout the Soudan we met these Ju-ju men or the wizards and the more interesting Ju-ju

women, the silly witches of Africa. As soon as we approached a Negro he would stare at us, and, young or old, expert or amateur, try to invoke the devil through his "hidden powers"; and after a minute or so, seeing that his powers were of no avail, he would run away and bury himself in the nearest thicket.

Two days more of slow cycling found us at another Negro hamlet. As before, we rested under the spacious shelter of a tree. Here we got acquainted with a very important class of people—a set of skilful, elderly Negroes of both the sexes who practised the double art of sorcery and medicine combined. But there was one old man who claimed three strings to his bow: In addition to his possessing magical and medical powers, he also represented the magistracy of his tribe in all matrimonial matters. It was thus.

He was nearly eighty, and had married six times and very naturally therefore all matrimonial disputes were referred to him (all other litigations being settled by blows). This man, I think, must have proved himself quite worthy of the appointment for after all had he not survived six wives?

He came and sat before us. Another Nigger, his assistant, I suppose, laid a large and extremely dirty bag of cloth on the ground and one by one,

with a solemn air, the old man brought out the articles of his trade as if he were exposing so many buried treasures to my view.

The first two or three articles that he produced were, however, really "buried" treasures ! He took out from the bag first a man's skull ; then came the thigh bones ; then followed a monkey's head, and an antelope's horns ; and then women's hair, rusty blades, iron nails, camel's dung, a number of charms and amulets, ivory handles, a molar tooth of a man, a piece of copper wire, several manuscripts, serpents' skins, coloured stones, wooden beads, green jades, brazen trinkets, roots, herbs and barks, dry figs, a looking-glass without frame or handle, and a hundred other odds and ends to daze the Negroes' imagination and to suit all the complex and multi-complex requirements of the double-dyed art and science of medico-witchery.

Each of these articles was supposed to have a specific remedial virtue, though what it exactly was I cannot tell. For example, the Ju-ju man grouped together a plait of woman's hair, the molar tooth mentioned above and some rusty blades. He told me (in the "deaf and dumb" language), what the combination represented ; but that, however, I mean to keep a secret. He tried to persuade us to keep an article or two for our

dear life's sake ; but Gustav, on the contrary, enriched his rare collection by the gift of a brass button of his coat and a broken saddle-strap.

Between Zinder and Kano there are half a dozen fairly big villages. I had not expected to learn so much about the people of Africa in such a short distance. It was the fourth or fifth day after leaving Zinder. From the direction towards which we were proceeding came the monotonous sounds of the tom-tom. Soon a company of Negroes came face to face with us, and as we stopped to see them, awkwardly enough, they stopped to see us. In the centre of the crowd was a young healthy Negress, and as we were looking at her, the crowd caught a peculiar instinct to dance madly around her. We thought this was a marriage procession. But later on we frequently came across similar dances and processions common amongst a class of people in the Soudan who form a society known as the Bundu.

The Bundu is a Society of the Africans maintained with the one object of giving sexual knowledge to their rising generation. The two peculiar features of the Bundu are, however, noteworthy : The knowledge is confined strictly to the female ; and her preceptors are all males. When a young Negress attains adolescence, her mates take her to

the thick bushes kept sacredly apart for the purpose, where she stays with them for some time to receive the necessary training. . . . The procession we had just now come across was returning home after performing a similar rite.

But what greatly attracted my notice was the excellent dressing of the young girl's hair. I have seen and admired the art of the Nubian hairdresser. The woman squats on the ground before the *coiffeuse*, and hardly once lifts her head before the whole business is finished, which takes nearly two hours. She generally begins by dishevelled the mass of woolly hair. It is then carefully straightened (as far as a Nigger's hair will permit), by a fine comb of black-wood ; and now the hairdresser shows her real art. The hair is divided into several thin braids, and each braid passes through a bead or ball of glass, amber or jade. Then a few braids are taken together and similarly bound by a big shell or spangle of copper ; the whole structure is then crowned by fixing a black comb (the wearer's private property), on the back of the head. Of course, such a fashion prevails only among the very advanced of the Nubian women.

The greatest danger in crossing a desert is the sand-storm. I had experienced one extremely severe storm in the Sahara. I had also experienced the electric storms near La Paz (Bolivia) ; the snow-

storms on the Andes, 16,000 ft. above the sea-level where the temperature falls suddenly from 35° F. to -15° F. in less than an hour; I was caught also in the "Trumberor" (earthquake) of Ayaveri in Peru; then there was the crackling tornado of the Mississippi zone which swept out men like mice. All these, no doubt, are liable to hazard; but yet they give their victim some chance to find out a shelter to protect himself.

On the morning following my first acquaintance with the Bundus, I was destined to experience a moment of my life that was by far the most thrilling. It was only a moment—maybe less—a brief, transient, fleeting passage of time that might have spelt the difference between life and permanent peace. It happened thus.

The day had not yet dawned and we were ready for the start. My bicycle was resting against a tree; I went to take it. Scarcely had I touched the handle-bar when—with a whiz a black cobra darted straight at my face, fell on the ground with a thud and disappeared in the bush. Perhaps he had spent the whole night with us, coiled on the cool handle-bar. A pair of African lions, baulking from opposite sides, could not have thrilled me so much. As he whizzed I actually felt the cold of his glossy skin on my right cheek. For two hours I sat there washing it with permanganate water;

and, I remember well, for the whole of that day I carried an awful sensation of my right cheek having become heavier than the left and the right eyes half-closed due to swelling. (We had no mirror handy). I spoke extremely little that day and did not recover the normal mood until two days later.

Kano was now only two days distant. We were already in the village that was the last in our route. An interesting scene we saw here was the Ho dance of the Negroes. If you consider the steps of the dancers, or their music or its rhythm they are (or at least to a stranger appear to be), the same—eternally the same, whether in a Bamboula, or in a Bundu dance, or in a Ho dance, or in fact in any dance of a truly Negro origin. The only difference is that the Bamboula looks like the Witches' Sabbath, the Bundu less so, and still less the Ho dance which is a festive dance of the Negroes to welcome a rainfall or to celebrate a good harvest.

Every African tribe has men and women who are naturally devoted to certain fixed duties. The dancers, for example, are not the sorcerers or Ju-ju men ; and a Ju-ju man is not a Bundu man ; nor will a snake-charmer pretend to possess healing powers ; and a tom-tom player will never lead a chorus ; and a head-hunter (one who kills men for

absolutely no reason), will never build his own hut. So is the case with the women. There are the Ju-ju women who are not quacks, and the vile dancers who will not grind the corn, and the ant-



ARRIVAL IN THE FORT OF KANO
ACCOMPANIED BY THE NATIVE BAND ON CAMELS

hill worshippers who will only look after all the ant-hills in and about their village.

We left this village the next day and thirty-six hours later were entering the border of Kano. Two men came on camels to guide us to the Fort.

A little before our approach to the Fort, the native band of Kano, mounted on beautiful camels,



THE AMIR OF KANO

joined us. An unusually large gathering was awaiting our arrival. The British Resident re-

ceived us ; and when we were within hail of the venerable Amir, I exchanged a significant smile with Gustav.

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